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IN THE OLD PATHS

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IN ENGLAND'S PENNSYLVANIA:

Penn Church from the Vicarage garden.

IN THE OLD PATHS

MEMORIES
OF LITERARY PILGRIMAGES

BY
ARTHUR GRANT
AUTHOR OF "RAMBLES IN ARCADIA."

"Ask for the old paths."

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PREFATORY NOTE

IT is a pleasant duty to thank the Editors of *The Scotsman* and *The Atlantic Monthly*, respectively, for their kind permission to the reprinting of these Essays in a more permanent shape. Since their appearance in their original form, the Papers have been revised and enlarged, before they were linked together in the present volume.

A. G.

St. Johns,
Colinton, Midlothian,
September, 1913

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I

IN THE OLD PATHS:

HERTFORDSHIRE REVISITED

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past.

Shakespeare's Sonnets.

IN THE OLD PATHS:

HERTFORDSHIRE REVISITED

Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

THERE comes a time to all of us when our thoughts are more or less retrospective, not that we tire of seeking pastures new, but we love to recall the old paths, where is the good way, and to walk therein. Nor do we forget that for those who do so there is the Divine promise that "Ye shall find rest for your souls." How many a weary soul has been cheered by these words! They breathe a spirit of restfulness far from the tumult and strife of modernism. To many of us the words of the old Hebrew poet seem to reopen vistas of paths trodden long ago, paths that have left an unforgotten trail of beauty down the years. The wanderer, or the exile from his native land, sees in these words some dreamland, it may be, "where Gadie rins, at the back o' Ben-no-chie." Visions of old bridle-paths over the hills of the Borderland come back to my memory after many years, paths dear to Scott and Hogg, Veitch and Shairp, and Dr. John Brown. Or the old path may lead over the Highland hills from one glen to another. As it follows the burn you can trace its course by the green birches among the

purple heather, until, when you reach the plateau-like summit of the watershed, half of Scotland spreads out before you in one glorious panorama. Then comes the familiar descent down through the fir woods until once more the great river rolls past at your feet, now in great swirling cataracts, now as silent as some English river in the Midlands,

> Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,

and you experience that rest, that peace which the busy world cannot give.

There is a certain perplexity connected with this hankering after the old paths, for we cannot allow ourselves to forget the charm of fresh ways over the land, when the interest of a long day's journey in a new country never flags, where every turn of the road brings a new vista, forms a new combination of features that are already becoming familiar. The stately river, the groups of poplars, the church towers have become in the course of the day like old friends ; only, as in a picture, their relation to each other changes, forming a new composition, and that new path before the end of the day becomes another memory to take its place among the old paths. Perhaps I am admitting too readily these new paths into the fellowship of the old ; but I have in my mind's eye certain byways that, though but recently visited for the first time, have long been cherished, even as Charles and Mary Lamb talked of Mackery End for years before they actually revelled in the leafy lanes that surround the Jacobean manor-house and farm of that name. For you the new path may have no personal memories while you wander

through its glades, yet its old-world story mingles with the spirit of your pilgrimage, and you walk in an atmosphere of sunshine and hero-worship. Many charming byways, my memories of which are preserved in this volume, have long been old paths in this literary sense. On the other hand, the restfulness of some of the old paths that in days gone by have echoed to your footsteps is sometimes accompanied by a perhaps almost inevitable touch of sadness. Wordsworth, in revisiting Yarrow with Sir Walter Scott, then broken in health, gave expression to this thought when he wrote of Yarrow that

> Did meet us with unaltered face,
> Though we were changed and changing.

Sir Walter himself expressed it in the touching poem on Weirdlaw Hill, when, looking around on the old familiar scenes that he had done so much to immortalise, his bruised spirit exclaimed in its pain :—

> Are they still such as once they were,
> Or is the dreary change in me ?

Brave Sir Walter ! Somehow we cannot lift a pen without thinking of him. But to return. The charm of that passage from Jeremiah is its restfulness. It leads you by green pastures and beside still waters to a haven of rest. There may be a sternness about the perpetual hills and the ever-flowing river, but there is no cold sphinx-like eternity about the old paths.

Thoughts such as these presented themselves to my mind as I revisited the paths and lanes of Hertfordshire after a long absence. Some of them I had not seen for many years, and you may be sure that I selected

these old paths for my first rambles. It was amid the brilliant weather of September, 1907, when, like the paths of the just, the sun shone more and more unto the perfect day. And perfect days they were, when the trees stood silent and motionless as in a dream, slumbering in the summer haze. The birds were beginning to sing again in the coppices, and the cattle to seek the shade of the beech trees in park and meadow. Two years later, as recorded in the succeeding paper, I again returned to the old paths to follow in the footsteps of Charles and Mary Lamb.

For a time my path would lead me close by a stream bordered by pollarded willows and artificially choked with watercress, for the Herts cress is sent far and wide, and then the river would assume its natural appearance, widening at times into marshland, in which the waterhens were busy. There, too, might be heard the plaintive cry of the lapwing. It is hot in the meadow, and, remembering the origin of the name of the county, which used to be spelt as pronounced, Hartford, the fair scene calls to mind the idyllic simile of another of the Hebrew poets, "even as the hart desireth the waterbrooks," for in olden times this must have been a land of springs, brooks, and marsh flowers. Again one hears the call of the peewit, and, close at hand, the cheery autumn note of the robin. From the brick-and-timber cottage yonder, a study in subdued reds and yellows, there rises the blue smoke that adds its human touch to the peaceful landscape.

One of the charms of Hertfordshire is its undulating character. The breezy upland common is never far distant, and so leaving the river-side the path begins to

ascend to the hanging woods yonder, where the cushats are crooning. No one need keep to the white chalk road in this countryside. Among the young firs the hum of insect life adds to the joyousness of the morn. Through the wood the path is vaulted like the long aisle of a cathedral, at the far end of which you can just see the sunlit park beyond. A squirrel leisurely crosses my path, and tame pheasants, that are understood to be wild, look at you with all the confidence of farmyard fowls. Once more I have reached the old park, with its manor-house and ruined church, and once more I am arrested by the sound of an " Amen " coming from an organ-led choir.

'Twas in 1894 that I first listened in the chancel of the ruined Gothic parish church while the stream of music swept across the park from the new to the old shrine, the old roofless shrine with its hallowed graves. Then it was evensong, and as the shadows lengthened, the restful music of the *Nunc Dimittis*, and of Newman's hymn, " Lead, Kindly Light," filled the ruined aisles with melody. To-day the glorious *Venite* (95th Psalm) and the triumphant *Benedictus*, the inspired song of the father of St. John, struck a note more in unison with the joyous sunshine without. Even the *Benedictus* closes with the hope that our feet may be guided " into the way of peace." Unwilling to disturb the worshippers, I rested within earshot of the open door. The silences, as the good man read the collects for the day, were punctuated by the choral " Amens," while out in the sunny park Nature's voices proclaimed the glory of God. In those mid-September mornings after the midsummer silence, the larks once more

sprang into the lift, and sang their song at heaven's gate, " Nature's chapel clerks," old Montgomery called them. Then came a longer silence, and as the preacher's voice rose and fell, his cadences might have had a slumberous effect, were it not for the eloquent voices without. Suddenly my reverie was disturbed by the organ playing an old Scots common-metre Psalm tune. Surely that is not " Martyrdom," but there was no mistaking it when the congregation took up the wail. The *Ecclesia Anglicana* and her stately ritual faded into the light of common day, as Wordsworth would have said. In its place stood for the nonce an old Scots parish kirk with canopied pulpit, desk, and box pews, and instead of the white-surpliced English vicar, I saw a kindly, cultured, white-haired Scots divine of the school of the old Moderates. As verse after verse, sung to the old tune, wailed forth the familiar melody, so long did the illusion last. I seemed to wait for the beadle to draw up the bolts and open the doors before the benediction in anticipation of the " skailin'. "

With the closing strains of " Martyrdom " faded the dream-picture of the Scots kirk and its old minister. It all happened so simply. The vicar had chosen for his concluding hymn, " As pants the hart for cooling streams," set to the old tune. The hymn itself is simply a seventeenth-century paraphrase of the 42nd Psalm, " Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks," and as such was sung by English Churchmen in the days when they still believed in Tate and Brady.

Truly, the association of music works strange freaks in the human mind. I am on English ground, listening to the music of an English church service ; but, as

Richard Wagner, writing on Beethoven, once put it, "we are conscious of another world which manifests itself by sound, and is perceptible only to the hearing, a true world of sound by the side of a world of light." The *world of light* is all around in the open park, but the *world of sound* and its associations had closed the eyelids and led the waking brain into a dreamland that heeds not time nor space, substituting for the living present a vision of the past. But I seem to be wandering in thought far from my old path, and as the members of the village congregation wend their ways across the park it is time for me to return to my temporary home. Down again through the wood, under its Gothic arches and over the stile, I followed the path once more, down again to the stream where the harts once panted for the water-brooks.

.

These "halcyon-days" cannot last for ever; but still within a mile or two of Edinburgh town there are old paths full of quiet beauty and restfulness. Alas! in October they led through many a sodden field, and sometimes the sun would shine through a silver haze of mist and the continuous drizzle took the form of silver rain. The grouping of light and shade was beautiful beyond words, but the fields had long been ripe unto the harvest and the Scottish farmer had been waiting wearily, wearily. At last, as I write the concluding sentences of this paper, we are bathed in a kind of Indian summer, a world of light and sunshine. It is mid-November. The elms are all but leafless; the ash holds out, as well it might, for this year it seemed as

if it would never burst into foliage ; the beeches make a brave show, but they have shed so many of their leaves that the homeland path is like one long gorgeous avenue carpeted with russet gold. At the present moment athwart the brilliant sunshine the leaves are still falling, oh, so silently, like golden flakes, and the old paths are buried for a time in the elements from which they derived their summer glory.

II

WHEATHAMPSTEAD AND CHARLES LAMB

The oldest thing I remember is Mackery End, or Mackarel End, as it is spelt, perhaps more properly, in some old maps of Hertfordshire, a farm-house, delightfully situated within a gentle walk from Wheathampstead.—*Charles Lamb.*

WHEATHAMPSTEAD AND CHARLES LAMB

ONCE more it is September, and once more I am amid the old paths, the old lanes of Hertfordshire, this time after an interval of two years only.

Wheathampstead is mainly known to lovers of English literature through Charles Lamb's incidental reference to this old-world village in one of the finest of his autobiographical essays, " Mackery End, in Hertfordshire." All his life he had heard his sister talk of Mackery End, a farmhouse within a gentle walk of Wheathampstead. The old farmhouse, the woodhouse, the pigeon-house, and the orchard were to him a dream of infancy, and so at last, when that pathetic pair did visit this part of Hertfordshire, Lamb was too full of Mackery End to tell us anything about Wheathampstead. It must be confessed that as a name Mackery End or Macry End, like Stoke Pogis, has not much to charm. A shrine, indeed, is twice blessed when added to its associations its name has a haunting melody all its own ; so it is with Wheathampstead, " so called of the corne " for which the county has been famous for centuries. Euston Road and King's Cross do not suggest " the sweet security of streets," whatever Charles Lamb may say ; but when, within an hour of leaving London, you step on to the platform at Wheathampstead station, you feel at peace with all

mankind. All our worries are forgotten as we reach beloved Hatfield of many memories, and proceed by the leisurely single branch line between Hatfield and Luton, following the course of the tiny Upper Lea, the river whose lower reaches are dear to the memory of Izaak Walton.

Don't be in a hurry to leave Wheathampstead station, for it is situated on a gentle height facing southwards, and when the train moves off, you will find that the whole village lies before you. As a picture how beautifully it composes! The spire of the parish church and the roofs of both nave and choir appear above the trees, and the eye lingers restfully on the great chestnut trees that separate the churchyard yonder from the rectory. In the foreground there is the warmth of red-brick cottages, weather-stained barns, and the stately chimneys of a seventeenth-century farmhouse. A few spruces give an additional character to this ideally English landscape. Away to the south towards St. Albans the road ascends until it is lost in the pastoral common of No Man's Land. As Autolycus put it to me, however, "If you tried to shoot a hare or a rabbit on that 'ere common you would soon find out whether or not it was no man's land; but, bless you," he continued, and a nod is as good as a wink, "there were ways and means." Autolycus knew all about it. I have a great respect for Autolycus and his opinions. It was he who informed me that Redbourn Church, a few miles distant, was built by Julius Cæsar, and referred me to the parson for corroboration. A few days later he accidentally met me at St. Albans, opposite an ancient hostelry (every other house is one,

so that the coincidence does not count for much), and kindly inquired if I had found the old church. The rogue, where shall I meet him next, at Stamford Fair in the company of mad Shallow, or in the company of old Sly's son in the neighbourhood of Marian Hacket's? But this is trifling.

Leaving Wheathampstead station, the road winds through the village, across the river Lea at the old bridge, and up the steep ascent to No Man's Land. I must not, however, be led astray from the objects of my pilgrimage, and so I enter the churchyard by its quaint lichgate, and renew my acquaintance with the old church of St. Helens, Wheathampstead. The swallows were collecting on the warm southern roof on the day of my visit. A few days later I saw them encircling the great Norman tower of St. Albans Abbey in their wheeling flights. It was a pleasing association, as old as the days of the Psalmist. *Quam dilecta sunt tabernacula.*

" Wouldst thou know," writes Charles Lamb, " the beauty of holiness ?—go alone on some week day, borrowing the keys of good Master Sexton, traverse the cool aisles of some country church : think of the piety that has kneeled there—the congregations, old and young, that have found consolation there—the meek pastor—the docile parishioner. With no disturbing element, no cross conflicting comparisons, drink in the tranquillity of the place, till thou thyself become as fixed and motionless as the marble effigies that weep and kneel around thee."

Of such is St. Helens, Wheathampstead. In former years I borrowed the keys, but now the door in the

north porch is open, and the rector, Canon Davys, who is himself an authority on Church architecture and Church music, has placed a notice in the porch intimating that the church is " open daily for private devotion, quiet rest, or suitable reading, and inspection of the building and its memorials." Here are no gorgeous windows of the princely Perpendicular period. The central tower dates from 1290, and the chancel windows consist of the form expressive of the Early English period, three long lancet lights. Beneath are the poppy-headed stalls of the choir, not the originals, unfortunately, but reproductions, made of old oak brought from Cambridge. The low screen cutting off the north transept is Jacobean work. The transepts contain exceptionally fine mural tablets and tombs with recumbent effigies of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century squires and dames. Here the lancet windows have given way to the decorated form, and as the sun shone through the painted window of the south transept it tinged with rose-colour and gold the alabaster tombs of a knight and his lady, even as in Keats's poem the wintry moon shone through the blazoned casement and " threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast."

But the glory of St. Helens, Wheathampstead, is its connection with the Macry family. John of Wheathampstead, 33rd Abbot of St. Albans, was the son of Hugh Bostock and his wife, Margaret Macry or Mackery, daughter of Thomas Macry of Macry End. Their brasses still pave the floor of the north transept of Wheathampstead Parish Church. John Wheathampstead was twice Abbot of St. Albans, from 1420 to

1440, and again in his old age, from 1451 to 1464, during the civil wars of the Roses. He combined the administrative ability of a great ecclesiastic with the other accomplishments of Churchmen in those times. He was a book-lover, historiographer, and writer of verse; he presented to the abbey church the finest organ in any monastery in England; he designed the great screen over the high altar afterwards erected by a successor, Abbot Wallingford; and he erected the richly carved watch-loft that guards the shrine of St. Alban, on which the wheat-ears of the abbot could be distinguished, just as in similar fashion the lamb of St. John the Baptist and the eagle of St. John the Evangelist were engraved as his insignia on the plate presented by him to the church. In St. Albans Abbey, now a cathedral, you still may see Abbot Wheathampstead's sepulchral chapel opposite the great shrine of which he was so proud to be the protector that even on the brasses in memory of his parents in the Macry Chapel at Wheathampstead he described them in Latin as "the father and mother of the Shepherd of the Sheep of the Anglican Proto-Martyr."

My path leads me through the Rector's meadow. Deborah in her song of triumph referred to the days when "the highways were unoccupied and the travellers walked through byways." To-day we are well content to leave the highway to the traveller, reserving the byway, Shakespeare's footpath way, for the pilgrim; and in Hertfordshire you never need leave the footpath way, unless when lost in a deep Hertfordshire lane it may be necessary to find your bearings somehow

by clambering through a gap in the hedge, overrun as usual with traveller's-joy, red-berried bryony, and woody nightshade or bitter-sweet, to where, as Charles Kingsley says, the white chalk-fields above are quivering hazy in the heat.

When first I found that the path through the Rector's meadow led to a chalk-stream, the famous Lea, I longed for Charles Kingsley as my guide. Lamb, who knew best the lower reaches of the Lea in Walton's country, has a "hit" at the angler of the cockney school, "There Hope sits every day speculating upon traditionary gudgeons"; but it was Kingsley's mission to sound the praises of English trouting streams, as compared with a mountain burn that is "like a turnpike road for three weeks and then like bottled porter for three days." Peaceful it is to follow the course of the gentle Lea, but not so peaceful to the contemplative angler, as Kingsley admits, when your "drop fly is fast wrapt in Ceratophyllum and Glyceria, Callitriche, and Potamogeton and half a dozen more horrid things with long names and longer stems." I know the sort of thing Kingsley describes, but which is Callitriche and which Potamogeton, I might say with John Byrom, "God bless us all! that's quite another thing." Sufficient it is for me to note that marsh flowers still linger on the borders of the stream in these autumnal mornings. Now the path leads to a wooden bridge, close to which there are beds of yellow musk and wild mint. From thence the river skirts the by-road as I wander westward until I reach a finger-post at the junction of what are practically four country lanes dominated by a small alehouse bearing the name of

" The Cherry Trees." There are many such alehouses in this countryside where the customers must be few and far between, and where the income seems to be derived from other sources, working an allotment, keeping pigs, or selling coals. I noticed, for example, that mine host of " The Marquis of Granby," another Leaside " public," with a grandiloquent name, varied his practice at the bar with that of chimney sweeping. Nearer London doubtless there are places not so primitive, but when I reached " The Cherry Trees " I was reminded of a passage in Lamb's delightful essay on *Old China*, a passage which, you remember, he puts into the mouth of " Bridget Elia," his sister Mary :—

" Then do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter's Bar, and Waltham, when we had a holyday—holydays and all other fun, are gone now we are rich—and the little hand-basket in which I used to deposit our day's fare of savory cold lamb and salad—and how you would pry about at noontide for some decent house, where we might go in and produce our store—only paying for the ale that you must call for—and speculate upon the looks of the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a tablecloth—and wish for such another hostess, as Izaak Walton has described many a one on the pleasant banks of the Lea when he went afishing ? "

Leaving the pleasant banks of the Lea, the path to Macry End leads northward for a few yards, when the lane suddenly widens out into a heath, with great stretches of old turf on either side of the way, bordered by noble elms. The pilgrim's path, however, is yonder field track through the gate to the left at the bottom of the heath.

On a previous pilgrimage to Macry End the field was glowing with purple lucerne. This year, faithful to tradition, the land had been sown with wheat. Here the harvest had been garnered, and three ploughs were already at work, with three horses yoked to each plough. The ploughman, amid the September sunshine,whistles as he goes, recalling, not Lamb, but Gray, in that ever-memorable Elegy, " How jocund did they drive their team afield ! " Crossing the fields diagonally, I am at last face to face with the red-tiled cottages, the Jacobean manor-house, and the farm of Macry End, all nestling under their ancestral oaks.

A veritable haunt of ancient peace is this old seventeenth-century manor-house, the successor, doubtless, of the earlier home of John of Wheathampstead. One notes the old bell-tower, the clustered chimneys, some spiral-shaped, the sundial, the stables deep red and lichened, from the roofs of which there comes the slumberous cooing of pigeons ; even the stately lawn, with its double row of standard roses leading to the front of the manor, are suggestive in their formalism of old-world gardens. A distant sound of guns indicates that partridge-shooting has begun among the stubble of this old corn country. The whole scene has an early Georgian atmosphere about it, that of a manor-house of the Stuart period as it would appear in the days of George III. To complete the illusion, while the lateness of the harvest had somewhat delayed the cub-hunting season, I am met at a turn of the road by the huntsman exercising his hounds.

Such were my impressions of the manor-house of Macry End ; but Charles and Mary Lamb had no eyes

for the manor-house, all their thoughts were centred in the farm across the way, where dwelt one of their handsome Wheathampstead cousins. "There was a grace and dignity, an amplitude of form and stature, answering to her mind, in this farmer's wife, which would have shined in a palace." How they feasted on the fatted calf, drank the home-made wine, and called each other by their Christian names, like "Scriptural cousins," is familiar to us all. The old yellow-tinted front of the farmhouse faces the west, surrounded by its great barns, mellowed with age into a study in red, gamboge, and brown. The house has evidently been added to since Lamb's time, and the modern front, facing the east, clothed with ivy, looks out into a garden and orchard. 'Tis a quiet pastoral scene, of field and meadow bordered with oak, ash, and elm, intersected by grass-grown lanes that lead to nowhere particular, sometimes to decayed farms far from the great roads, where the watch-dogs bark a joyful welcome and the whole population of the poultry-yard rush out to greet the infrequent passer-by.

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On the last Sunday of September I return to St. Helens, Wheathampstead. Both the name and the place have a fascination for me. It is eventide, and as I leave the common and enter the footpath through the cornfields that lead from Gustardwood towards Wheathampstead village the setting sun in splashes of red and gold is glowing through the elms, as if their massive boughs were mullions and transoms of a great cathedral window. The six bells of St. Helens are

ringing for evensong, and now the swell of the organ is heard, as the choir singing a processional hymn take their places in the stalls. When describing St. Helens in the full blaze of noonday I did not mention that for evening services the church is lit entirely by candles, three rows down each side of the nave, a cluster of five on either side of the lectern, and four separate clusters lighting respectively the pulpit, the two sides of the choir, and the sanctuary. The mediæval effect is very striking. For a time the painted windows told their stories as long as the daylight lingered ; but the lancet windows in the chancel were the first to fade, then the candelabra emphasised the shadows of the great dim roof and the ponderous pillars of the central tower. They cast, too, a Rembrandtesque light on the groups of worshippers. We are back into the fourteenth century, contemporaries of John of Wheathampstead and Macry End, or of that sweet lady of the alabaster tomb. Nothing seemed to break the continuity of that ancient sacred service ; church, lessons, liturgy, music, all were alike time-hallowed. The old order changeth, but not at Wheathampstead.

But now the day is ended, and with its close so also ends another pilgrimage. I hope that it will not be the last to the same neighbourhood. Alas ! is there a single one of all those hallowed shrines that we would not gladly revisit, places dear to our memory, places so far removed from the environment and worry of our workaday life ! It is in this mood that I bid farewell to the Church of St. Helen. As I linger for a moment before I turn into the village, only a dim glimmer from the monastic-looking tapers of the great church, lights

the churchway path. Beyond the village the overhanging trees of a Hertfordshire lane make the September night doubly dark. Not till I reach the breezy common at the top of the hill does the white chalk-road reflect the radiance of a thousand stars.

III

THE RIGOUR OF THE YEAR: AMID THE OLD PATHS OF THE HOMELAND

I see the winter approaching without much concern, though a passionate lover of fine weather and the pleasant scenes of summer; but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon the earth, I suppose, so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fireside in the winter.—*Cowper's Letters.*

THE RIGOUR OF THE YEAR:

AMID THE OLD PATHS OF THE HOMELAND

WHEN I begin to despair of the advent of the ideal spring, halcyon-days when one could exclaim, " For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone," I turn with consolation to William Cowper. In his sequestered nooks by the gently flowing Ouse, he had nothing else to do but translate Homer and chronicle those delightful trivialities to which in this fretful age we turn for solace. It is hard that our ideals should be rudely shattered, and when winter lingers in the lap of spring or even in that of summer, we sigh for the springs of long ago, until Cowper reminds us of

> The long protracted rigour of the year,

of his experience of " the rigours of winter " in June, of " the ice-islands that spoil our summers," and of fires in the study even amid the high midsummer pomps. " Winter," said a friend of mine emphatically, " began last year (1909) on the 25th of October." He was thinking of his chrysanthemums. On the 24th they were in the full blaze of their autumnal glory; on the 25th, like the Flowers of the Forest, they were a' wede away. Only a few weeks earlier it was still September, and I was wandering among the lanes of Hertfordshire, as described in the preceding paper.

Winter seemed afar off on that Sunday when I bade farewell to St. Helens, Wheathampstead, and when the white chalk-road reflected the starry radiance of an autumnal evening sky. It was still September, and old parish churches clothed in russet and crimson suggested Cowper, Gray, and Lamb, kindred souls along the pilgrim's way. Who does not love September, and especially those of us who have reached the September of our lives ? Its mellow radiance is in tune with that period of " autumnal felicity," as Edward Gibbon beautifully expresses it at the close of his Memoir, that period into which he himself vainly hoped to enter after the arduous labours of his great work.

Truly the rigour of the year set in with sudden swiftness, as the last chrysanthemum drooped even in the sheltered corner of the garden. On the 31st of October the old canal by Hermiston, sweetest of names, was frozen over. It was a strange sight—the ice-bound pool against a leafy background, with an atmosphere of brilliant autumn sunshine and haze, when the distant Pentlands were outlined in the faintest wash of cobalt, and the white smoke of the cottages rose perpendicularly into the cessile air. Where, on the canal, there was open water, the seagulls made a pretty picture amid this inland scene ; but the searching sound of a foghorn on the misty Forth indicated that after all they had not travelled far from their natural haunts.

Autumn still lingered, however, by my lowland burn. A dipper skimmed upstream, following its windings ; a blackbird rested on the russet thorn ; a cloud of lapwings circled overhead ; and a bee buzzed past as if

it had forgotten that the next day was the first of November. Ah! if we had more of such days. Forgive me if I love to string their memories together, and wonder whether by and by I may wander among green fields and by quiet streams such as this (I could dispense with the ice-bound canal), rest in old-world churches, and babble about them till the end comes.

The frost grew keener as the season advanced, until we were registering in mid-November twenty to twenty-five degrees. Yet these were days of bright sunshine, when the golden russet of the beeches contrasted with the deep green of the Scots firs, and the thrushes were busy picking at the haws on the thorn, still in full leafage. Up on the moor the rime lay heavy on the grass, and looking southwards the November morning sunshine transmuted the upland meadows into waves of silver, the gradations being caused by the undulating hillocks of tufted bent. The topmost twigs of the ash, last year's growth, still held out, and the beeches seemed to burn deeper and deeper. Gray has a fine ode, "On the pleasure arising from vicissitude." Our winter memories are full of such vicissitudes. "Yesterday," he wrote :—

> Yesterday the sullen year
> Saw the snowy whirlwind fly.

To-day it is melting on the hill-side, and to-morrow ?

> To-morrow ? Why to-morrow I may be
> Myself with yesterday's sev'n thousand years.

When, in early December, a brilliant silver sun cast a dazzling sheen on the snowclad hill, once more on

the southern garden slope the soft, fresh grass suggested the spring. Washington Irving noted this characteristic of our climate in his delightful word-pictures of Christmas at Bracebridge Hall. "Notwithstanding the frostiness of the morning, the sun in his cloudless journey has acquired sufficient power to melt away the thin covering of snow from every southern declivity, and to bring out the living green which adorns an English landscape even in mid-winter. Large tracts of smiling verdure contrasted with the dazzling whiteness of the shaded slopes and hollows. . . . There was something truly cheering in this triumph of warmth and verdure over the frosty thraldom of winter; it was, as the squire observed, an emblem of Christmas hospitality." Washington Irving always puts me into a pleasant train of thought. Indeed, it was on Christmas Day, as I wandered along the homeland path referred to at the close of the first paper, beneath its bare beeches, that Bracebridge Hall came into my mind. I longed for a familiar object in the middle distance, the old square embattled tower with its delicate spire. How in this Scottish bypath I missed its homeliness, missed, too, the nestling vicarage, a retreat such as Keble or Dean Hole would have loved, clothed in summer with roses and wistaria, and surrounded with old yews, old larches, old limes. But there was no such vista, and even our homely Pentlands looked stern and wild. Suddenly I was attracted by the chatter of chaffinches, flocking around some old thorn trees by the wayside. They, too, were holding their Christmas. They say that at Glastonbury there was a thorn once the staff of St. Joseph, that used to

blossom at Christmas, but no thorn could equal that on which the birds were so busy. Its cluster of coral berries glistened in the winter sunshine. Two months later the tips of the same thorn were coral red, this time with tiny buds, the promise of the spring.

In the beginning of March, 1910, a few haws, memories of autumn like the russet leaves still clinging to the beech, lingered on the thorn, beneath which on the garden slope the coltsfoot, the violet, and the crinkled green leaves of the primrose and cowslip linked the autumn with the spring. But the glory of the garden, defying the rigour of the year, was the mezereon, with its clusters of purple flowers on its leafless branches. In the Church's floral kalendar the mezereon is associated with the 24th of February, the festival of St. Matthias. To many, however, it is better known through Cowper's description in his " Winter's Walk at Noon." There it is linked with the hypericum or St. John's wort, another of the flowers associated with saints' days.

> Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm
> Of flowers, like flies clothing her slender rods,
> That scarce a leaf appears; mezereon too,
> Though leafless, well attired, and thick beset
> With blushing wreaths, investing every spray.

March was certainly on its best behaviour, and the sun was breaking through the clouds as I returned to the old path. How fair in these early spring days are the plumelets of the larch. Green are the thorns, but greener the feathery sprays of this deciduous pine, when the great trees in the park seem at a distance to show no signs of spring's awakening. And yet, sil-

houetted against the stronger March light, as compared with that of the brief November day, there is a grace and stateliness about those naked boughs that we cannot discern in leafy June.

Amid the bird music that fills the garden in the spring, I was interested to note in the beginning of April the apparently persistent proximity of a curlew. It seemed as if the spirit of our moorlands and glens was haunting the very garden itself. Like Wordsworth, one was prompted to inquire :—

> Shall I call thee Bird,
> Or but a wandering voice ?

I was not without some misgiving. The prolonged whirling whistle seemed cut short : it had not the true " Tibbie Shiels " ring about it. Then I discovered that one of our starlings on the topmost bough of the bare ash tree was endowed with the gift of mimicry. He would give us a few of his woodnotes wild, unconcernedly prune his wings as if nothing had happened, and the next moment he was " wheepling " away like a whaup. The rascal kept up the illusion long after he was discovered, much to our delight, for did he not recall moorland rambles in years gone by, angling days among the rivers of the Scottish Borderland ?

The promise of March did not continue, and with April, our winter entered its second term. It was on a 24th of April a few years ago that we witnessed a memorable snowstorm. On that occasion the heavy fall rested on the sycamore boughs, clustered round the flowers of the elm in tiny balls, and clad the

Austrian pines with great white pugnacious-looking boxing-gloves. Only the delicate boughs of the beech, pointing to the leaden sky, scorned to bear their burden of snow, while the larches drooped gracefully under their white feathery sprays. Down by the river the general effect was as of a hawthorn-bordered stream rich with May blossom. Such is an April memory. We could not boast a like experience this year, but strong winds and low temperatures prolonged the rigour of the year. It seemed as if March and April had exchanged places. Night after night the thermometer kept registering a temperature only a few degrees above freezing point. " New leaf, new life—the days of frost are o'er," wrote Tennyson, but this line did not apply to the uncertain glories of April, 1910. Even the hackneyed quotation from Browning, to which I had so often pinned my faith—" Oh, to be in England now that April's there "—brought its own disillusionment, as in mid-April I rambled by the classic Thames, under sunless skies and along wind-swept towing-paths. Yet 'twere churlish to grumble amid the cowslip meadows of the Isis, with the voice of the cuckoo in the coppice and the swallow dipping and darting over quiet backwaters as if it were a day in June.

In concluding this paper on the rigour of the year, I am conscious that, after all, I have been content to record for the most part such of its beauties as appealed to me. The stern realities of a hard winter are too aggressive to be ignored ; we must take them as they come. It is a long cry to last October, and the memories of September rambles in Charles Lamb's country

seem like a dream ; but if sometimes winter thaws a little and shows a smiling face, we must not be ungrateful. In May its rigours are easily forgotten as we look forward to the joys of summer. We love to remember only the silver-grey sunshine that now and again lit the gloom. Walter Pater, in one of his essays, recalls how as a child—for doubtless it was himself of whom he was writing—he passed one evening a garden gate usually closed. That night it stood open ; " and, lo ! within, a great red hawthorn in full flower, embossing heavily the bleached and twisted trunk and branches, so aged that there were but few green leaves thereon—a plumage of tender, crimson fire out of the heart of the dry wood." That passing glimpse was never afterwards forgotten ; it haunted his dreams—happy dreams !—as he seemed to loiter along magic roadways of crimson flowers. Summer after summer as the flowers came on, he thought of the blossom of the red hawthorn. So it should be with our memories of the past. Let us try to forget the long dreary wall that so often circumscribes life's highway, shutting out the sunshine ; and to remember only the surpassing beauty of that momentary vision through the open garden gate.

IV

IN ENGLAND'S PENNSYLVANIA

Guarding in sylvan shades the name of Penn the apostle.

Longfellow's "Evangeline."

IN ENGLAND'S PENNSYLVANIA

I

PENN VILLAGE, STOKE POGIS, AND CHALFONT

WHEN Charles II insisted on William Penn's new territory of Sylvania on the virgin shores of America being called Pennsylvania, he coined one of the sweetest place-names in colonial history. Unlike Boston and Plymouth, and many other historic names common to both countries, the name of Pennsylvania may not be found on the map of England ; but I love to think of the little tableland of beechen woods in South Buckinghamshire, extending, say, from Penn Village to Jordans and the Chalfonts, and from Amersham to Stoke Pogis, as the Pennsylvania of England. It is a stretch of thickly wooded country, dear to every lover of English history and literature. Indeed, the literary pilgrim is embarrassed with the richness of its associations. You cannot pull up at an old-world Bucks village, or pass an old manor-house without discovering that here lingers some literary tradition or association, as of Shakespeare at Grendon, Milton at Chalfont St. Giles and at Horton, Gray and Penn at Stoke Pogis, Waller and Burke at Beaconsfield, Cowper at Olney, Chesterfield at Eythrope, John

Hampden at Hampden, Isaac Disraeli at Bradenham, and in our own day Lord Beaconsfield, both at Bradenham and Hughenden. We even find that John Knox preached a sermon in the parish church of Amersham protesting against the accession of Mary Tudor, naturally to him a congenial task.

South Buckinghamshire is particularly revered by every patriotic American as the ancestral home of the Penns, and as containing the sacred soil in which the great Founder of Pennsylvania was laid to rest after his labours. The romance of William Penn is one of the most interesting episodes in Caroline history, and, as we shall see, reveals a pleasing trait in the characters of Charles II and James II that ought not to be overlooked.

From my book-room windows I daily look across the Water of Leith to the Pentland Hills, while "the river at my garden's end" flows on past Scotia's capital, only to rest when it reaches the waters of the misty Forth. But

> There are hills beyond Pentland and lands beyond Forth

to the south as well as to the north, and thus it was during a glorious September holiday that I feasted my eyes every morning on the sunlit Chiltern Hills of Buckinghamshire beyond the tiny Thame that flowed so gently on to meet the greater river of a still greater capital. From an old seventeenth-century farmhouse, around which the golden grain had been garnered, I rambled into a land of beech-crowned hills, storied churches, and ancient Elizabethan manor-houses. Just over yon sleepy down-like hills to the south-east, where

at nightfall one can sometimes see the gleam of distant lamplit London, lies the Penn-land of England. To me it has all the charm of an undiscovered country over the hills and far away. For my Penn-land rambles



A CORNER OF PENN VILLAGE.

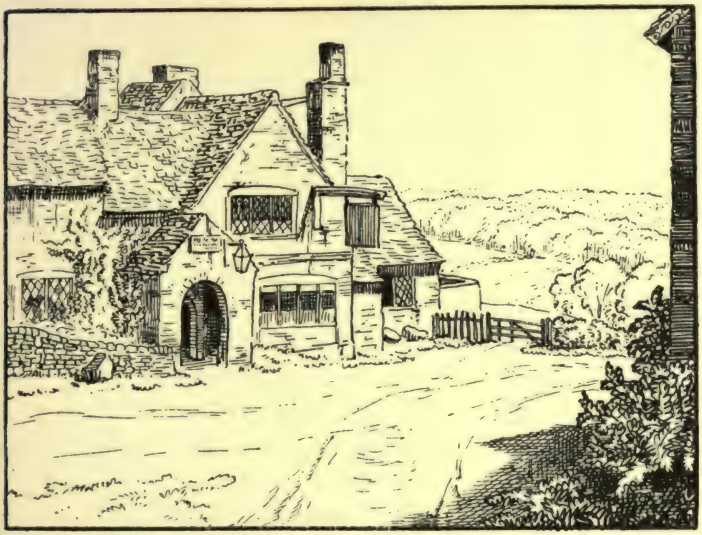
I always started from Amersham, sometimes over the hills to Penn itself, now by way of Beaconsfield to Stoke Pogis, or at another time by Chalfont St. Giles to Jordans. Amersham, I may add, was practically

more distant to me at my remote farmhouse among the hills than it is to the literary pilgrim who starts from London.

I have frequently praised the lanes of Hertfordshire, but they do not surpass those of South Buckinghamshire. The road from Amersham to Penn winds through beech woods, within which there are signs of violets and wood-sorrel, reminiscent of spring. The dog-rose, the bracken, and the gorse are always present, and here and there clumps of pines add strength to the character of the landscape. On the border of a wood I passed the church of the village of Penn Street, a modern church with a steeple, unusual in a locality where square embattled towers are the rule. It is a picturesque village with its little alehouse, "The Squirrel," suggestive of beechnuts, and another that bears the suggestive name of the "Hit or Miss." My path leads me past Penn House, a red-brick mansion-house, all ivy-clad gables and chimneys, one gable bearing the date 1536. One of the delights connected with rambles in England is that in the most out-of-the-way places you stumble across manor-houses that, in themselves or on account of the families with which they are associated, have become famous in England's history. So it is with this old manor-house. The Penns became extinct in the elder branch by the death of Roger Penn in 1735, when the estate passed by the marriage of his sister and heir to Sir Nathaniel Curzon, Baronet. Later still, a Curzon married the daughter of Admiral Howe, and to this circumstance the present family owes its triple name, representing the Penns, Curzons, and Howes. With the Penns we are more

immediately interested. The Howes not only link Penn House with the Admiral, but also with General Howe, who was with Wolfe at Quebec, and who is still better known in connection with the War of Independence.

From Penn Bottom the path ascends to the weather-beaten village of Penn itself, on the top of the hill.



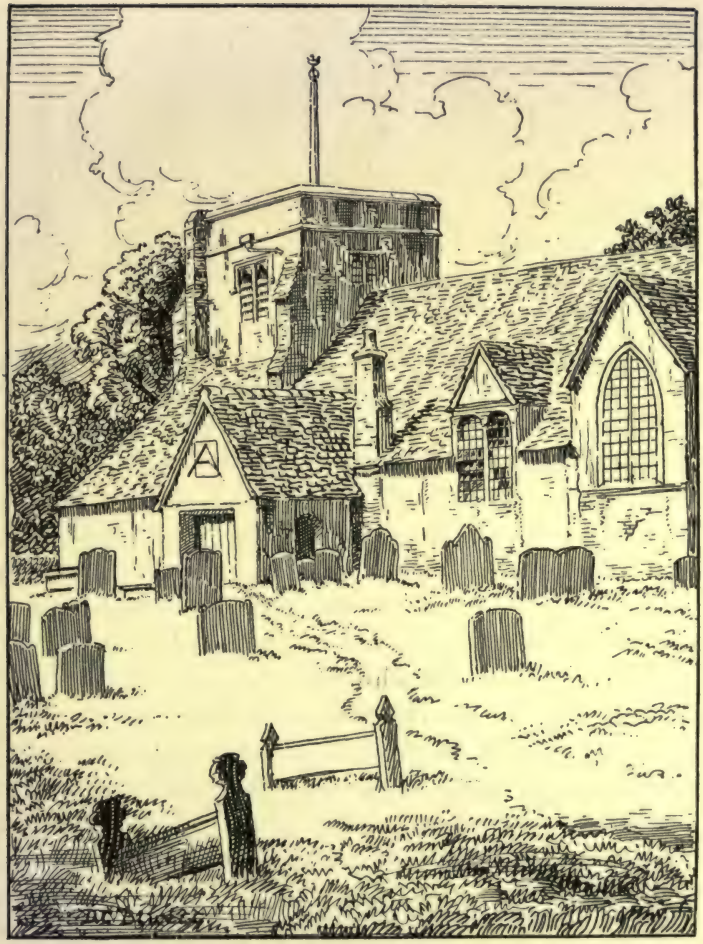
THE TOP OF THE HILL:

The Village Inn, Penn.

Penn Church is a plain old structure of rubble and flint, originally early English in style and dating from 1213. The chancel, added in 1736, contains the only stained-glass window, filled in during the following year. This parish church, however, is interesting in other memorials of the dead, mural monuments by

Chantrey, old hatchments, and ancient brasses. The pilgrim who has no access to family archives can here muse over the historic names of Penn, Howe, and Curzon. It should be stated that William Penn's father, Admiral Penn, belonged to a branch of the Penn family which removed to Wiltshire. They had hived off from the old stock. Admiral Penn himself was buried at St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. But the old district had a magnetic attraction for his family, and thus it happens that some of the grandchildren of William Penn are buried here, while his son, Thomas Penn of Stoke Pogis, and his descendants are buried in the church of the famous Elegy. In the south chancel chapel at Penn still remain splendid brasses fixed on blue stone. One is a finely cut brass to the memory of John Pen of Pen, who died in 1597, aged 63. He and his lady are dressed in Elizabethan Court dress. Other brasses are dedicated to the memory of a later John Pen, his wife Sarah, five sons and five daughters, dating from 1641, and to a William Pen and Martha his wife, a son, and two daughters, also of the seventeenth century.

From Penn to Stoke Pogis is only some seven or eight miles—nine, perhaps, if you follow the windings of the highways and byways of this sylvan country. The church and churchyard of Stoke Pogis can never be described too often. Throughout the length and breadth of England there are many more beautiful shrines. One thinks, for example, of the noble chancel of the Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-on-Avon, where Shakespeare lies : the great and beautiful church of St. Mary Redcliffe, in which Admiral Penn was



PENN CHURCH, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE :

In the ancient homeland of the Penns.

interred ; and the parish church of Berkhampstead just across the border into Hertfordshire, where the poet Cowper's father was rector, and in the pastoral house of which the gentle bard was born. But Gray has thrown around this old parish church a spell that is all its own. Stoke Pogis has no long-drawn aisles, nor fretted vaults, where pealing anthems swell the note of praise. Rather has it old-fashioned pews in which the Sir Roger de Coverleys of the eighteenth century might gently slumber. It was while I was seated in Gray's pew that I observed a slab recording the fact that in a vault in this church are deposited the remains of Thomas Penn of Stoke Park, son of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. Thomas Penn, it appeared, had returned to the bosom of the Church of England. He visited Pennsylvania in 1732, and was presented with an address by the Assembly. In 1760 he purchased Stoke Park. The classic modern mansion was built by John Penn, grandson of the great governor, and it was he also who erected the monument to Gray in the meadow beyond the churchyard. The last of the Penns of Stoke was buried at Stoke Pogis in 1869. It is pleasing to think that Thomas Penn spent his declining years only some six miles distant from the sacred spot where rests his illustrious father, beside the old Quaker meeting-house among the beechen woods of Jordans.

Situated as I was in North Buckinghamshire, I preferred to visit Jordans, not from Stoke Pogis, but by way of Chalfont St. Giles, so that I might pass Milton's cottage ; for was not John Milton one of the links in the chain that bound William Penn to this

corner of Buckinghamshire ? My practice in making these literary pilgrimages is to find out " the foot-path way," and stick to it. In Scotland these paths are practically non-existent, and so I appreciate the more, the luxury of wandering from village to village through the fields. From Amersham to Chalfont the footpath is parallel to the King's highway, following the course of a lowland stream, a gently flowing, clear-bottomed chalk-stream, called the Misbourne, lined with water-cress and sedge, Near Stratton Chase I passed a mill whose mill-stream was alive with white ducks, and from there I obtained my first glimpse of the square embattled church tower of Chalfont St. Giles. The village consists of a single street of old timbered, green-lichened cottages, old-fashioned ale-houses and signposts, with the inevitable duck-pond. A great elm half-way down the village street looked as if it had been an ancient tree even in Milton's time. At the church I was so shadowed by an old verger that I have but a dim impression of its features, dim as the faded frescoes on its walls. In visiting such churches the indefinable charm, the holy calm, the awe-inspiring beauty vanish entirely when an officious official turns the building into a mediæval museum ; but when the door of the porch is open, or when I have only to lift the latch of the wire screen intended to keep the birds from entering and building their nests in the sanctuaries of the Lord, when I may step silently and alone to the altar-rails, then I bless the vicar of the parish for this sweet solitude, this haven of rest, this " haunt of ancient peace." Yet Charles Lamb, in that most sympathetic essay on the Quakers, would

have it that theirs was the greater peace, the silence of communion, spirit with spirit, seated together at their meeting-house. " To pace alone," he says, " to pace alone in the cloisters, or side aisles of some cathedral, time-stricken . . . is but a vulgar luxury compared with that which those enjoy, who come together for the purposes of more complete, abstracted solitude." I shall return to this charming paper when I come to record my visit to Jordans.

Leaving the churchyard on his way to Jordans, the pilgrim must needs pass Milton's cottage on his left at the south end of the village of Chalfont St. Giles. One room only is open to the public, but in that room I could sit undisturbed and think of him who was the great Puritan poet of England, and at the same time the poet, next to Shakespeare and Spenser, whose works glow with all the richness of the Elizabethans, fifty years after their time. There is little to distinguish Milton's cottage from many another in the district, but it must have been a delightful retreat from the plague-haunted metropolis. Milton knew the lanes of Buckinghamshire. They had already inspired his verse when, as a young man at Horton, some thirteen miles distant, he wrote his *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and so when Ellwood the Quaker took the " pretty box for him in Giles Chalfont," Milton was doubtless revisiting familiar ground in the best of company, familiar, and yet with this terrible difference, that to him, like his own Samson, the sun was now " dark and silent as the Moon when she deserts the night." The faithful Ellwood lived close at hand, the Penningtons occupied Chalfont Grange, and with them dwelt the

beautiful Gulielma Maria Springett, daughter of Sir William Springett, whose widow had married Isaac Pennington. It was into this charming circle that young William Penn entered and there met his future wife. Hepworth Dixon in his picturesque way has happily described the scene in his biography of Penn.

"Guli was fond of music. Music was Milton's second passion. In the cottage of the poet, in the Grange of the philosopher, how one can fancy the hours flying past between psalms of love, high converse from the lips of the inspired bard, old stories of the Revolution in which the elder people had each had a prominent share, and probably the recitation of favourite passages from that stupendous work which was to crown the blind and aged poet, and become one of the grandest heirlooms of mankind! It was to these favoured friends that Milton first made known that he had been engaged in writing *Paradise Lost;* and it was also in their society that Ellwood suggested to him the theme of his *Paradise Regained.* Immortal Chalfont!"

As you enter the low-roofed room with its great cross-beam, you wonder how much of the old atmosphere is left, the atmosphere of the dainty Priscilla, for Guli belonged to the same charming sisterhood as Longfellow's ancestress. The porch had gone, but you can look out from Milton's latticed window into the little garden beyond. At the back of the iron grate, in the great open fireplace, a Scottish thistle, oddly enough, is the chief ornament. A few Chippendale chairs, small oak stools, a table and bookcase containing various editions of

Milton's works, and other Miltoniana, constitute the furnishings of the Poet's Room at the present day. A small book-closet off this room, with its tiny window and shelves contemporary with the age of the cottage, seems somehow to suggest more of the poet than the well-kept little museum. What books were stored on those shelves would be an interesting speculation. How eagerly we would scan their titles if we could, just as in a later age the literary pilgrim to Abbotsford, in passing through the library and study, loves to run his or her eyes along the screened bookshelves and to identify here and there the old " classics " from which in his " Notes " the good Sir Walter used to quote so copiously. But to return. One loves to think that Guli (or should we not say " Miss Springett " ?) sometimes sat in this room, waiting perhaps until young William Penn called to escort her back to the Grange. All this is so delightfully English that we would fain forget the other side of the story, the cruel persecutions that were helping to drain Old England of its best blood and to build up a New England across the Atlantic. Leaving the cottage, I lingered for a moment in the little garden in which grapes and tomatoes ripened in the warm September sunshine, amid the resplendent autumnal glories of sunflowers, asters, and dahlias.

II

JORDANS AND WILLIAM PENN

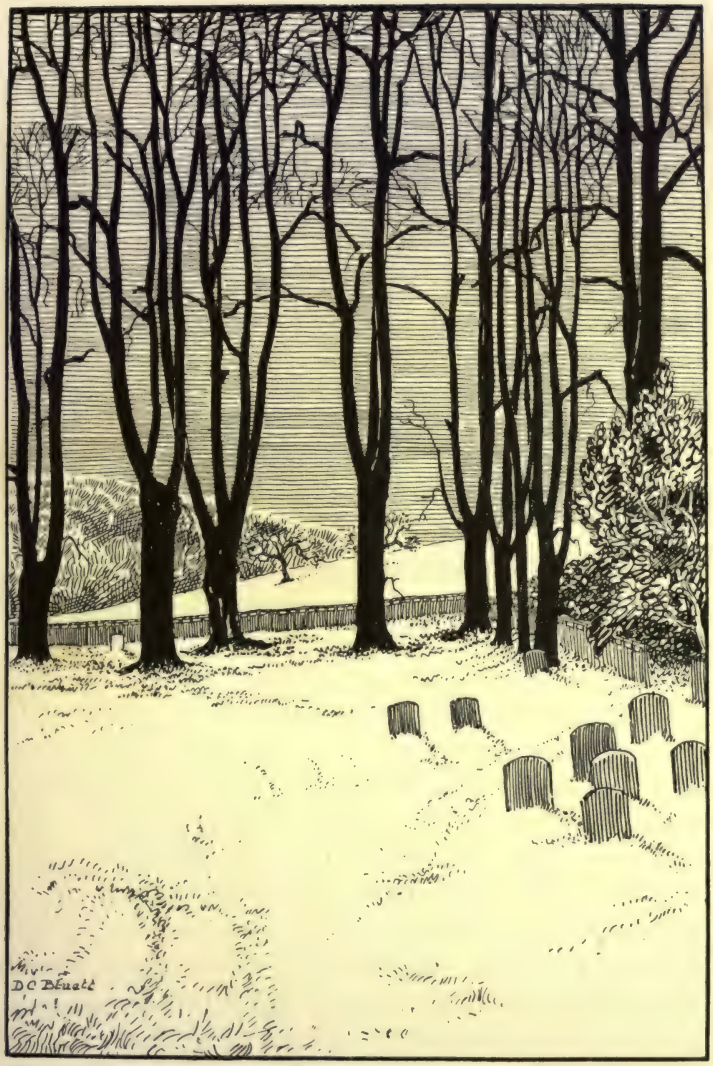
To the memories of Penn, Stoke Pogis, and Chalfont, I was now to add that of Jordans, the innermost sanctuary, shall I say, of England's Pennsylvania. The earlier Penns are sleeping beneath their Elizabethan memorials in old Penn Church; the later Penns, Squires of Stoke Park, built themselves a lordly manor-house and sought to share with the poet Gray the immortality of Stoke Pogis; but Jordans differs from either. As a shrine, it is unique in its simplicity, this little meeting-house and burying-ground with its plain headstones. Yet here rests William Penn, "the apostle," as Longfellow lovingly calls him; here too rests Guli Penn, here also the gentle Ellwood to whom the Friends owe this burying-ground, the persecuted Penningtons, and all that goodly company of heroes and heroines, martyrs in the cause of truth and peace.

Leaving Chalfont St. Giles, the road winds past old farmhouses whose roofs, in relief against the sky, curve like switchbacks. These wonderful lanes with their high hedges are still my companions. Here is one of holly, gay with clusters of berries, reminding one in these late autumn days that Christmastide is not so very far off; and now the road widens out into sunbathed grassy open spaces decked with bracken and

with the last of the trailing bridal-like garlands of wild clematis, so happily named " traveller's-joy." Beyond the hedgerows, as usual in this pleasant land, the landscape is bounded by the glorious vista of woods.

Suddenly, on my left, as I descended into a cuplike hollow in this tableland, I came upon the historic meeting-house. There was no mistaking it, a plain old-fashioned building embosomed in beech woods, lonely save for Jordans farmhouse, which I had just passed. Owing to the fall in the ground, there was ample stabling accommodation underneath the meeting-house for the Friends, who, in those seventeenth- and eighteenth-century days, must perforce ride many a long mile before they could reach this secluded spot. It was not so long since there was not a single headstone in this primitive burying-ground. From 1671 the Quakers slept in nameless graves. Penn's biographer, Dixon, says that when he visited Jordans in 1851 with Granville Penn, the great-grandson of the state founder, they had some difficulty in identifying the particular spot " where heaves the turf " over his sacred remains. Mr. Dixon adds that Granville Penn " is disposed to mark the spot by some simple but durable record—a plain stone or block of granite ; and if this be not done, the neglect will only hasten the day on which his ancestor's remains will be carried off to America—their proper and inevitable home ! "[1] Twelve years later, at the heads of such graves as had been identified

[1] In 1881 and again in 1909 proposals were made to remove the remains of Penn to the United States, but the negotiations fortunately proved unsuccessful. Long may the remains of one of England's noblest sons rest in hallowed English ground.



JORDANS BURYING-GROUND :

The innermost sanctuary of England's Pennsylvania.

were placed the simple memorial stones, with name and date of burial only, that we see to-day. Penn still rests at Jordans. Made welcome by the kindly caretaker, I lingered long in the old meeting-room, poring over the old-world names recorded on its walls. These names included a list of some 385 burials between 1671 and 1845. The first entry I looked for read as follows :—

"Penn, William, Esquire, 1718, the illustrious founder of Pennsylvania, died at his residence at Ruscombe, near Twyford, Berks, 4th day [Wednesday] 30th of 5th mo. [July] 1718 aged 74, buried at Jordans, 3rd day [Tuesday] 5th of 6th mo. [August] 1718 when some 30 Quaker ministers attended the funeral including Thomas Story and a vast concourse of Friends and others."

Story was the faithful friend of his latter years. Gulielma's name was recorded under date 1693. Our gentle Guli had died at the age of 50, "one of ten thousand," broken in spirit. Weary and heavy-laden, the sorrows of her husband, which she insisted in sharing, had brought her to a premature grave. Too well had she lived up to Penn's own ideal of a perfect wife, "a friend, a companion, a second self, one that bears an equal share with thee in all thy toils and troubles." At least two other Gulielmas are inscribed on the roll at Jordans, one a daughter who died in 1689, and the other a Gulielma Pitt who died in 1746. The names of the Penningtons and Ellwoods complete the revered circle that sat around John Milton in the old Chalfont days. Less-known names are the Zacharys, and the Lovelaces, surely more Cavalier than Quaker; and as illustrating the seventeenth- and

eighteenth-century fashion of adopting the old Hebrew nomenclature, I could not refrain from noting the record of the burials of the Sutterfield family, of Abraham and Rebecca Sutterfield, whose children had been named respectively Joshua, Luke, Abiah, Kezia, Jacob, and Luke (the second of the name). Rebecca Sutterfield! How Hawthorne could have woven a Puritan romance around such a name!

"Every Quakeress," says Charles Lamb, "is a lily; and when they come up in bands to their Whitsun-conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the Metropolis, from all parts of the United Kingdom, they show like troops of the Shining Ones." So thought our most beloved of English essayists as he met them amid the bustle of London; but Jordans, though so near the metropolis, reckoned by miles—some twenty or thereabout—is yet "far from the madding crowd," and, as you rest on one of the homely benches of the meeting-house, you cannot but feel how charmingly Lamb interpreted the undefinable glamourie of this place. "You go away with a sermon not made with hands . . . you have bathed with stillness. O when the spirit is sore fretted, even tired to sickness of the janglings, and nonsense-noises of the world, what a balm and a solace it is, to go and seat yourself, for a quiet half-hour, upon some undisputed corner of a bench, among the gentle Quakers!" Reader, if thou wouldst experience this peace, a peace that truly and literally passeth understanding, make a pilgrimage to Jordans.

Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the career of William Penn and this his last

resting-place. The story of his life is, to a great extent, the history of the later Stuart period. It was full of contrasts. Penn played many parts. He combined the man of thought, the idealist, the poet, with the man of action. The son of one of England's greatest admirals (for Sir William Penn's services to his country have never had full justice done to them), the founder of a great colony, the patrician, courtier, personal friend of King James II, William Penn was yet withal a man who, through all his long career as leader and protector of the Quakers, never ceased to be persecuted for righteousness' sake, a man who often had no certain dwelling-place save the prison-house. How very human were the relations between father and son! Admiral Sir William Penn (we cannot call him the old admiral, for he died after a full and strenuous life at the age of forty-nine) had built up hopes of a brilliant future for his son. William, however, was a serious-minded youth, somewhat of a visionary. At fifteen, he was entered as a gentleman commoner at Christ Church, Oxford; but the spell fell upon him early in life, and when Charles II in 1660 ordered that surplices should once more be worn at divine service, young Penn, joined by some kindred spirits, attacked the surpliced students, and tore the prelatic vestments over their heads. Oxford, however, was not Edinburgh, nor Penn a Jenny Geddes, and so, instead of another revolution, all that happened was that the admiral's young hopeful was expelled from college. A mere matter of temperament, some will say, but it hurt Sir William to the quick. Contrast the feeling of Sir Thomas Browne, for example, who rejoiced "to

see the return of the comely Anglican order in old Episcopal Norwich."

Sir William next sent his son to France. He returned, 'tis true, with the polished manners of a gentleman, but his mind was made up, and, to his father's great grief, it was not long before young Penn decided to throw preferment to the winds and to link his fortunes with that humble sect the Quakers. Notwithstanding his ultra-Puritanism, he retained the distinguished manners of a cavalier, or of what was then called "a gentleman of quality." Samuel Pepys thus notes his return from France: "Mr. Pen, Sir William's son, is come back from France, and come to visit my wife; a most modish person grown, she says, a fine gentleman." Pepys, who missed nothing, noticed that there was something wrong between the admiral and his son. "All things, I fear, do not go well with them. They look discontentedly, but I know not what ails them." Later, he understood that there were religious differences "which I now perceive is one thing that hath put Sir William so long off the hookes." At last the secret is out. Writing in his diary under date December 29th, 1667, Pepys says, "At night comes Mrs. Turner to see us; and there, among other talk, she tells me that Mr. William Pen, who is lately come from Ireland, is a Quaker again, or some very melancholy thing; that he cares for no company, nor comes into any, which is a pleasant thing, after his being abroad so long." It was said that the admiral was to have been raised to the peerage, and well he deserved the honour, but William was his heir, and the Quaker would have no such "worldly title or patent."

We are glad to know that father and son were reconciled before Sir William's death, and that, knowing the perils with which young Penn would be beset in an age that could not tolerate dissent, the admiral on his deathbed asked the Duke of York to protect his son so far as he consistently could. The Duke, it will be remembered, was Lord High Admiral, while Sir William was Vice-Admiral of England; hence the bond of friendship between these two men, that never was broken. How faithfully James carried out the dying man's request is now a matter of history. Indeed, the intimacy between Charles II, James II, and the Penns, father and son, is one of the most pleasing episodes in their annals. No one can say that William Penn had not the courage of his convictions. What he said, he said; and to know that the last of the Stuart kings were faithful friends of Penn the Quaker reveals a trait of character in these two men that should not be forgotten. But while Penn's access to the royal presence enabled him to do much towards softening the sufferings of the persecuted Quakers, it was the cause of his own later troubles, when over and over again the cry arose that Penn was a Papist and Jesuit.

I have already referred to the naming of Pennsylvania by Charles II, after the admiral. More interesting, too, than any romance is the history of that settlement. Well might Penn exclaim, as he does, in one of his letters, "Oh, how sweet is the quiet of these parts, freed from the anxious and troublesome solicitations, hurries, and perplexities of woeful Europe!" Sweet indeed! to be away from the bigotry of the

old world, a world that could not distinguish between Quakers and Papists, a world that could accuse the man who tore the surplices at Oxford of being a Jesuit! Nothing illustrates more strikingly Penn's extraordinary versatility and manifold gifts, than his wonderful letter to the Free Society of Traders of Pennsylvania, dated August 16th, 1683, in which he describes the fertility of his own province, the serenity of its climate, its natural resources, its fauna, and the nobility of its aboriginal inhabitants. When he leaves again for England in 1684, it is thus he apostrophises Philadelphia :

" And thou Philadelphia, the virgin settlement of this province, named before thou wert born, what love, what care, what service, and what travail, has there been to bring thee forth and preserve thee from such as would abuse and defile thee!

" Oh, that thou mayest be kept from the evil that would overwhelm thee; that faithful to the God of thy mercies, in the life of righteousness thou mayest be preserved to the end! My soul prays to God for thee, that thou mayest stand in the day of trial, that thy children may be blessed of the Lord, and thy people saved by His power. My love to thee has been great, and the remembrance of thee affects my heart and mine eye.—The God of eternal strength keep and preserve thee to His glory and peace."

How we seem to see in these lines the workings of Penn's mind! In seeking to give written expression to his feelings towards Philadelphia, Penn models his apostrophe on the words of the Master Himself. Knowing the character of the man, there can be no doubt as to his sincerity.

Over and over again the great colonist longed to return to his retreat at Pennsbury, Pennsylvania, and was as often prevented by arrestments on the old charges, and so it was not until 1699 that he made his second voyage. He returned to England in 1701, in connection with proposed changes in the government



"I pass through Amersham once more."

of North America. Penn never saw his colony again. Troubles at home, that told on his health, showered fast upon him. In 1712 he was seized with apoplectic fits, and on July 30th, 1718, he died, as the memorial on the wall there shows, and left behind him an imperishable name.

But I have lingered all too long at Jordans, too long at least for a September day, if I wish to be home before nightfall. In the gloaming, as I pass through Amersham once more, a single bell is tolling for evensong, and very impressive the parish church looks with

its chancel only alight. I cannot remain to the service, for I have still to retrace my steps to the distant farm-house among the hills. It was a peaceful impression that I carried away with me. The song of the aged Simeon, so appropriately incorporated in the Order for Evening Prayer in that time-hallowed liturgy, seemed somehow to become associated in my mind with the passing of William Penn. During his lifetime the Quakers had experienced their *de profundis*. They had sounded the depths. They had passed through the valley. They were now climbing the sunny side of the hill, on whose slopes Charles Lamb saw " the Shining Ones " ; and so in 1718 their apostle also might now depart in peace, for his eyes had seen their salvation prepared " before the face of all people."

V

STOKE POGIS AND THOMAS GRAY

Hark! how the sacred calm that breathes around,
Bids every fierce tumultuous passion cease;
In still small accents whispering from the ground,
A grateful earnest of eternal peace.

Gray's "Elegy."

[One of the stanzas omitted by the poet in his final version of the *Elegy*.]

STOKE POGIS AND THOMAS GRAY

ONE of the wishes of a lifetime was realised on a bright September day when I stood by the side of Gray's tomb in Stoke Pogis churchyard. In the preceding paper I described my pilgrim's way, first from the old market town of Amersham to Penn village, and again from Amersham to Chalfont St. Giles. Once more I start from Amersham, and again my route is one long lane, garlanded with every variety of autumnal luxuriance, hedges decked with dog-roses, sloes, gorse, broom, and heather. At one place the gorse and broom were both in bloom together, even a spray or two of honeysuckle still blossomed in this wonderful lane, and everywhere beyond the hedgerows the horizon seemed bounded by beech woods. At another delightful spot four roads met, and the ancient finger-posts pointed respectively to Amersham, Chalfont, Beaconsfield, and Penn. Memories of bygone centuries thus linger in the very finger-posts.

Crossing the Oxford road at Beaconsfield, I passed its grand old church. A few years ago a memorial containing a medallion portrait of Edmund Burke, "patriot, orator, statesman," was placed within the church; and in the churchyard a pyramidal tomb of white-and-black marble situated under a great walnut tree marks the spot where Edmund Waller was buried.

During his long life, from 1605 to 1687, he played many parts, too many parts perhaps. Here, however, we would only think of him as a poet—

Qui inter poetas sui temporis facile princeps,

to quote from the inscription on his monument. Both Burke and Waller would each require a paper to himself, and so I resume my journey, skirting the famous Burnham Beeches, until I reach " the rugged elms " that encircle the churchyard of the *Elegy*.

All around are parks surrounding the manors of Stoke Park, Stoke Court, and Stoke Place, but when the pilgrim follows the pathway to the lichgate, and walks up the avenue of cypresses and yews, he feels that its modern marble monuments, and the very care with which the churchyard is tended, detract somewhat from its rural simplicity. But rural it still is in other respects. The great yew near the venerable porch remains, supported in its old age by poles. The church tower is still mantled with ivy, and the exterior of the church, partly built of rubble and flint and partly of ancient brick, and roofed with red lichen-crusted tiles, has a time-consecrated look worthy of the *Elegy*. Here there are not even the country sounds that we associate with the smallest hamlet, for hamlet there is none close to Stoke Pogis. The church and churchyard, as often happens, are situated close to the remains of the old manor-house that has been superseded by the great white-domed classic building, in the deer park, dating from 1799. The scene of the *Elegy* is thus entirely isolated, and surrounded by trees, some of them Scots firs. No sound save their melancholy

wail can reach this spot, unless, perhaps, the curfew when it " tolls the knell of parting day," the flute-like tremolo of the owl, or the woodlark's " farewell song." A keen observer of nature, as his letters show, Gray noted the exact day in the year when he first heard the song of the chaffinch or the thrush, the skylark or the nightingale, and for him, too, " the meanest flower that blows " could give thoughts that often lay " too deep for tears." Indeed, he anticipates Wordsworth in his lines :—

> The meanest flowret of the vale,
> The simplest note that swells the gale,
> The common sun, the air, the skies,
> To him are opening Paradise.

Gray's permanent residence was at Cambridge, a delight of a place, he writes, when there is nobody in it ; but he spent the vacations at Stoke Court, the home of his widowed mother and his aunt, Miss Antrobus, and when they died they were buried in the plain brick tomb with the blue slab that afterwards became his own last resting-place. You can still read the inscription to his mother, Dorothy Gray, surely one of the sweetest of names, " the tender mother of many children, one of whom had the misfortune to survive her." (How these words remind me of Cowper !) Gray's mother died in 1753, aged sixty-seven. Thomas Gray, her son, had " survived " her eighteen years when he died in 1771, aged fifty-five. But Gray's connection with the district dates as early as 1737, at least, when, as a young man of twenty-one, we find him writing a vivacious letter to his life-long friend, Horace Walpole, describing his life at Burnham, where his mother's

brother, Robert Antrobus, resided. Very happy is the description of his uncle Robert, who is " a great hunter, in imagination," and whose dogs " take up every chair in the house," so that Gray is forced to stand as he writes his letter, doubtless a humorous exaggeration. Poor Antrobus! The gout prevents his riding to hounds, and so he regales his ears with their " comfortable noise "—the music of the pack—at home, while he denounces his nephew for walking when he should ride, and reading when he should hunt.

" My comfort amidst all this is, that I have at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common) all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices ; mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover cliff ; but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds.

" At the foot of one of these squats ME I (*il penseroso*) and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise, before he had an Eve ; but I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do there."

One could go on quoting from Gray's letters. He had not yet seen the Alps nor the Scottish Highlands,

of the charm of which he wrote so enthusiastically twenty years after "The Forty-Five"; and so his reference to Dover Cliff is evidently reminiscent of *King Lear*. Very pleasing, too, is his picture of the Burnham Beeches "dreaming out their old stories to the winds." They are dreaming still. Some thirty-four years later Horace Walpole, to whom the above letter was addressed, wrote of him that "Humour was his natural and original turn; and though from his childhood he was grave and reserved, his genius led him to see things ludicrously and satirically." Here is another example from a letter written at Stoke in 1754 to his friend Wharton: "I take it ill you should say anything against the Mole. It is a reflection, I see, cast at the Thames. Do you think that rivers which have lived in London and its neighbourhood all their days, will run roaring and tumbling about, like your Tramontane torrents in the north? No, they only glide and whisper." One is reminded here of the first stanza of his *Progress of Poetry*, familiar to all musical folks as the well-known glee *Awake, Æolian lyre*. You remember the short *largo* passage in which the composer Danby interprets Gray's couplet:—

> Now the rich stream of music winds along,
> Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,

just like the poet's own river Thames. Few men, indeed, in the eighteenth century had a finer taste in music than Thomas Gray, and though linked to Stoke Pogis by the most sacred ties, no one more than he was capable of appreciating the beauty and dignity of the

more ornate ritual of our English cathedrals and many of our churches,

> Where through the long-drawn aisle, and fretted vault
> The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

"My studies," he says in a letter to Dr. Wharton in 1758, "lie among the cathedrals, and the tombs, and the ruins. To think, though to little purpose, has been the chief amusement of my days; and when I would not or cannot think, I dream."

Stoke Church, however, is a simple parish church in a country churchyard, where the Puritan element stamped its prevailing character. The men of Buckinghamshire only a century before had been in the thick of the Civil War, and when Gray wished to typify the rude forefathers of the hamlet, he pictured "some village Hampden," some "mute, inglorious Milton," "some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood," names not merely associated with the history of the county, but with the period of the Puritan struggle. The Puritan tradition has lingered long in the parish. Even the squire at the manor in Gray's time belonged, as we have seen, to the Penn family.

The interior of Stoke Church is in keeping with this tradition. It still contains an ugly gallery in the south side of the chancel, and on the north side a room like a private box in a theatre, containing a row of Queen Anne chairs—the Penn chairs they are called—for the occupants for the time being of the manor-house, who enter direct from Stoke Park by a private corridor of modern Gothic work. How long will these survivals of feudalism remain in our country churches—"taber-

nacles with rings and curtains to them," as Bishop Corbet ironically described such box pews so long ago as the time of Charles I? If there is one place where all men are equal without respect of persons, surely it is in the House of God, and those who love our beautiful pre-Reformation churches cannot be too grateful that among the satisfactory, if incidental, results of the Oxford Movement have been the sweeping away of the ugly galleries and high square pews in so many places, and the restoration of the custom of "the open door" on week days, giving facilities for private meditation, a privilege of which the antiquary and ecclesiologist are not slow to take reverent advantage. Gray's pew is still pointed out, a back seat (characteristic of his retiring disposition) in the extreme south-west corner of the nave, and above it there is the mural slab recording that in a vault are deposited the remains of Thomas Penn of Stoke Park, son of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. Thomas Penn was a life-long contemporary of the poet himself. It was a later Penn who, in 1799, erected the well-known cenotaph to Gray's memory in the adjoining park. Through this connection Stoke is linked with the old Quaker meeting-house and resting-place at Jordans, only some six miles off, hidden away amid beechen woods,

> Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap

over the nameless graves of generations of those early Quakers who in troublous times resembled much the Scottish Covenanters.

The more one reads of Gray, the more one loves

him. He was always buried among his books, for he was one of the most deeply read men of his time. Would that he had written more than he did. Matthew Arnold, in a fine appreciation of Gray, uses as his text a remark of the Master of Pembroke Hall, Gray's friend and executor, written a fortnight after the poet's death :—

" Everything is now dark and melancholy in Mr. Gray's room, not a trace of him remains there ; it looks as if it had been for some time uninhabited, and the room bespoke for another inhabitant. The thoughts I have of him will last, and will be useful to me the few years I can expect to live. *He never spoke out*, but I believe, from some little expressions I now remember to have dropped from him, that for some time past he thought himself nearer his end than those about him apprehended."

He never spoke out. " In these four words," says Arnold, " is contained the whole history of Gray's life as a man and as a poet." We do not love him the less because " he never spoke out," rather do our hearts warm to him the more. We love him as we love William Cowper, and in a lesser degree William Shenstone. There was something of the same temperament, too, in the author of *The Christian Year*. Keble's humility, said Cardinal Newman, was of an almost morbid character. How the sensitive minds of such poets as Gray, Cowper, and Keble recoil from the Sir Oracles, taken at their own estimate by a careless public, who are apt to confound mere truculence with force of character. It is hard sometimes to refrain from kicking against the pricks occa-

sionally, even the pin-pricks, hard, indeed, not to speak out sometimes. When Sir Oracle, with his "big bulk of boisterous bombast," gives instructions that when he opens his mouth "let no dog bark," it is not in human nature to muzzle your terrier; or when Dogberry, "drest in a little brief authority," implores you to write him down an ass, it requires some restraint not to comply with his wishes. "Modest doubt is the beacon of the wise," says Shakespeare in another passage; but Gray, perhaps, had too much modest doubt. He liked to write. He liked himself better when he did write. Instead, he read and read and read, and English literature to-day is the poorer because Thomas Gray did not speak out, not after the manner of a Sir Oracle or Dogberry,

> One whom the music of his own sweet voice
> Doth ravish like enchanting harmony,

but out of the rich stores of his encyclopædic mind. In his own delicately humorous, self-depreciatory way Gray could, however, write to a friend:

"At present I feel myself able to write a catalogue, or to read the peerage book, or Miller's *Gardening Dictionary*, and am thankful that there are such employments and such authors in the world. Some people, who hold me cheap for this, are doing perhaps what is not half so well worth while. As to posterity, I may ask (with somebody whom I have forgotten), What has it done to oblige me?"

Like many other retiring men, Gray had a genius for friendship. Those who were so honoured, worshipped him, and when "the inevitable hour" came

no one was more fitted than he to comfort the sorrowing in their day of trouble. When we read the letters that he wrote on such occasions, we are grateful that in the eighteenth century people did write letters and that their friends preserved them. The spirit of the *Elegy* breathes through them all. Sometimes you wonder what his thoughts were seated in that back pew in Stoke Church. The beautiful liturgy of the Established Church, conserving all that was best in devotional literature, had remained practically the same for centuries sacred as the sacred shrine itself. It was otherwise with the sermon that too often reflected the fashion of the time or the idiosyncrasies of the preacher, and so we find Gray confessing to his friend Mason, himself a dignitary of York, that " I have long thought of reading Jeremy Taylor, for I am persuaded that chopping logic in the pulpit, as our divines have done since the Revolution, is not the thing." The good Bishop was indeed a man after Gray's own heart. Both had the same intimate knowledge of the Classics. Both in their time had the same love of Nature that marked them out from their contemporaries. The man who could point a moral or illustrate a Divine truth in " the descending pearls of a misty morning," in the shining beauty of a dove's neck, in the image of a rainbow, in the struggle of a skylark to reach the empyrean until it " did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below," such a kindred spirit was more likely to appeal to Gray than the divine who merely chopped logic.

But I must draw these rambling musings to a close. It is difficult to tear oneself away from Stoke Pogis. I know as I retrace my steps through the lichgate into the meadow that the trees will hide the churchyard from me, perhaps for ever, and I " cast one longing, lingering look behind." This quotation brings me back to the *Elegy* once more. The poem is never far from my thoughts. It knows no limitations of time nor place. It is as fresh to-day in the twentieth century as it was in the eighteenth. In one of his lines Gray uses the expression " the rod of empire." The *Elegy* became an " empire " poem on the 12th of September, 1759, when on that ever-memorable occasion General Wolfe recited the poem the night before his great and fateful victory on the heights above Quebec.

VI

THE HOMELAND OF THE DISRAELIS

At the foot of the Berkshire Downs (Chiltern Hills), and itself on a gentle elevation, there is an old hall with gable ends and lattice windows, standing in grounds which once were stately, and where there are yet glade-like terraces of yew trees, which give an air of dignity to a neglected scene. . . . Behind the hall and its enclosure the country was common land, but picturesque. It had once been a beech forest, and though the timber had greatly cleared, the green land was still occasionally dotted, sometimes with groups, and sometimes with single trees, while the juniper which here abounded, and rose to a great height, gave a rich wildness to the scene, and sustained its forest character.—*Beaconsfield's* "*Endymion.*"

THE HOMELAND OF THE DISRAELIS

ON one particular September morning my footsteps were bent towards the tiny hamlet of Bradenham, for Bradenham and Hughenden, the homeland of the Disraelis, are both, as we have seen, in Buckinghamshire. "There's no place like Bradenham," wrote the impressionable youth of twenty-six who left his "beloved and beechy Bucks" for a tour in the Mediterranean in the summer of 1830. Fifty years later, when he had become our greatest Foreign Minister since the days of Chatham, and after he had restored Great Britain to her paramount place among the nations, he retired to his study to record his memories of the past in fictional form, to live over again the old Reform Bill days, and what a past, what memories! The result was *Endymion*—that brilliant and fascinating combination of fiction, history, and autobiography, all in one—the rural scenes of which, it is needless to add, were laid in Bradenham, the home of his youth.

It was about eleven o'clock when I reached the sleepy old village of West Wycombe, surrounded on all sides by beech-clad hills, and situated on the Oxford road about thirty-two miles from London. As a great highway its glory hath departed, and the old coaching inns—"The George and Dragon," "The White Swan,"

"The Nag's Head"—seemed almost like silent memorials of the old joys of the road. Even the eighteenth-century church on the hill, with its closed doors and grass-grown approach, has a decayed air about it, while the great classic mausoleum of the Despencers has an equally depressing effect. But Nature herself is ever young. The grand old yews that flank the hill-side still remain, and bluebells and wild thyme grow on the grassy slope. From West Wycombe Church the path to Bradenham leads to a beech wood, and, as I enter, I hear the gentle swish of a passing shower of rain upon the topmost boughs, a grateful sound after leaving the dusty motor-haunted highway. Now the sun breaks forth again, and turns last year's fallen beech leaves into russet and red gold, relieved by the delicate green of the wood sorrel, the wood violet, the wild strawberry, and Disraeli's own native primroses. This must be a delightful walk in the springtime. Beyond the wood and on the opposite slope I have my first glimpse of Bradenham village. The harvest is gathered in and stacked in the farmyard at my feet, and yonder across the railway line lies the hamlet, with the tower of the church and the red walls of the vicarage nestling among the trees, and bathed in sunshine, while the heights behind are still fringed with beechen woods.

Bradenham Church is a small building with a square tower of the prevailing Buckinghamshire type, and consists of a simple chancel and nave, with perpendicular Gothic east and west windows, and a fine, richly moulded south doorway of early Norman work. On the north side of the chancel there is a chantry chapel, erected by Lord Windsor in 1542, and here a

small mural tablet bears the inscription : " Sacred to the memories of Isaac Disraeli, Esquire, D.C.L., of Bradenham House, author of *Curiosities of Literature*, who died January 19, 1848, in his 82d year ; and of his wife, Maria, to whom he was united for forty-five years. She died April 21, 1847, in the 72d year of her age." Other memorials there are more stately, perhaps, but this is the one that interests the literary pilgrim of to-day—the last resting-place of Disraeli the elder. As I leave the chantry chapel I observe high up on its walls two old heraldic hatchments ; the one bears the motto "*Mors Janua Vitæ*," and the other has for its legend the single word "*Resurgam*"—for a single word, perhaps, the most pregnant with meaning of any word in the whole vocabulary of the human race.

Only the garden wall divides the churchyard from the home of the Disraelis, a plain but stately manor, looking west and south across the valley to the hills beyond, and sheltered from the east and north by its overhanging woods—an ideal abode for a literary recluse like Isaac Disraeli. Beneath its cedars and amid its avenues of box and yew Queen Elizabeth was entertained by Lord Windsor on her way to Oxford in 1566. In 1877 another great Queen might have done the manor a similar honour, but Fate ruled otherwise. Circumstances prevented the permanent acquisition of Bradenham by Isaac Disraeli, who consequently purchased the neighbouring estate of Hughenden, and thus in after years Queen Victoria's visit was not to Bradenham, but over the hills to Hughenden. Following the fortunes of the family, I, too, went over the

hills to Hughenden by a pathway which Lord Beaconsfield never forgot—a pathway skirting the manor-house, and gay with bracken, foxgloves, juniper, and heather. The first heather I plucked this year grew on a Buckinghamshire common. Yes, "there's no place like Bradenham"; it was the Earl of Beaconsfield's first and last love. He was seventy-six when he completed *Endymion*, and to me one of the most restful passages in that dazzling whirl of life and politics in high places is his description of the old English hall quoted at the beginning of this paper. At Bradenham, we are told, a study was always ready for his visits to the roof-tree.

"At Bradenham," writes Mr. Walter Sichel in his deeply interesting and able "study" of *Disraeli*, "his constant retreat, the 'Hurstley' of his last novel, all is natural and unconstrained. Here, at least, he is free. Here he 'drives the quill' with his famous father, reads and rides, meditates and is mirthful. Here with that gifted sister 'Sa'—'Sa,' a name soon afterwards doubly endeared to him through Lord Lyndhurst's daughter; 'Sa,' who, while others doubt or twit, ever believes and heartens him—he dreams, improvises, discourses."

In another passage Mr. Sichel adds :—

"The Buckinghamshire peasants still cherish his memory; and it may be said with truth that the deepest affections of this extraordinary man, whom vapid worldlings sneered at as a callous cynic, were reserved for his country, his county, his home, and his friends, for effort and for distress. Many a young

aspirant to fame, moreover, in literature or public life has owed much to his generous encouragement. He loved to dwell on the vicissitudes of things, and his motto, ' Forti nihil difficile,' represents his conviction. In private, when he was not entertaining, his habits were of the simplest. In two things only he was profuse : books and light. He loved to see every room of Hughenden illuminated with candles."

To return to Disraeli's love of Bradenham, we find that love of home running like a golden thread through his *Home Letters* written during that Mediterranean tour to which I have already referred, when he would write to his sister Sarah from Gibraltar : " Write to me about Bradenham, about dogs and horses, orchards, gardens, who calls, where you go, who my father sees in London, what is said. This is what I want." As he drops off to sleep by the wood fire in an Albanian castle he thinks " of the blazing blocks in the hall of Bradenham." While he feasts royally on the honey of Hymettus, and the wild boar of Pentelicus, the latter was " not as good as Bradenham pork." As he ransacks Oriental bazaars, his one thought is the manor among the hills. " I never bought anything but with a view to its character as furniture. Everything is for Bradenham." Even amid the garish splendours of Stamboul, when he thinks of home, " a mingled picture of domestic enjoyment and fresh butter, from both of which I have been so long estranged, daily flits across my fancy." All this is very refreshing. We see in the *Home Letters* of this young prince of dandies, a lovable personality, an affectionate son and brother, and a

believer in home life, traits of character that afterwards endeared him to his Sovereign.

Yes, " there's no place like Bradenham," and now I have reached the top of the hill. Paths crossing each other through forest-like glades are perplexingly numerous, now flecked with sunshine, now deep in shadow according as they wind in and out among the brakes, past clumps of beeches or of oaks, clumps of junipers, and the ever-present purple heather and palm-like bracken. Naphill Common is more like the scene of a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, more like the home of Oberon and Titania, than any place else that I can think of. That gentle philosopher, Jaques de Bois, might easily have mistaken this common for a bit of the Forest of Arden. It is at least a part of the old Chiltern forest, and here, too, the poor sequestered stag might have come for shelter, for how goes the old song ? You can march along to its joyful measure, " sweeping on in the turf-cover'd way," as the song says.

In thorny woods in Buckinghamshire,
Right fol-lol de-lide O,
O there's the place to hunt the deer,
Fol-de-rol lol-de-ri-do.
Through open path and grassy glade,
Through sunny ranges and deepening shade,
The hunters ride, in scarlet arrayed,
Fol-de-lol, lol-de-lol lido !

Leaving the common, and passing Hunt's Hill to the right, my route lay through Nap Hill village, thence through a tree-fringed lane, past a field of purple trifolium and a ploughed field, with white flints lying hot in the sun on the top of another breezy table-

land, where there were pleasing vistas of red-and-white cottages, and white chalk-roads winding up into the sky. Here the path descends into the woods of Hughenden. At this point you may walk close up to the manor-house, with its great firs, larches, and yews on the lawn. The parish church of Hughenden is situated in the park lower down the slope. After visiting so many picturesque Buckinghamshire churches, one has to confess a slight feeling of disappointment on seeing it for the first time. Surely the hand of the restorer has been laid heavily upon it. Externally it is to all intent a modern Gothic structure, relieved only by a blaze of crimson ampelopsis. The beautiful interior, however, forms a fitting shrine for the great statesman. Its Beaconsfield memorial windows, especially the great chancel and west windows, make the whole building glow like the casement window in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, where—

> 'Mong thousand heraldries,
> And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
> A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

On the north wall of the chancel, just above the Earl's stall, is Queen Victoria's memorial. "To the dear and honoured memory of Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, this memorial is placed by his grateful Sovereign and friend, Victoria R.I. *Kings love him that speaketh right.*" By command of the Queen, his banner, helmet, and sword, as Knight of the Garter, are also preserved in the chancel.

Outside the church, and beneath the east window of the Montfort Chapel, is the family burying-ground.

Here lie James and Ralph Disraeli and Mary Anne, Countess of Beaconsfield, who died in 1872, followed nine years later by the Earl himself, on the 19th of April, 1881. A Primrose Dame of Buckinghamshire, knowing the object of my pilgrimage, had given me that morning a small chaplet to lay on his grave, composed simply of primrose leaves, wood violets, and bays, yet eloquent in its very simplicity. I laid it reverently on the grass beside the cross of scarlet geraniums and blue lobelia. Resting here awhile, one could not but think of the long years of Parliamentary strife before Lord Beaconsfield came to his own. The greater part of the nineteenth century was to pass over his head before his great ideals were to take form. Seldom it is that epoch-making men live to see the fruits of their labours, but their works do follow them, and Great Britain owes her position to-day in the councils of Europe to the founder of our modern foreign policy. Lord Salisbury truly said of him that "zeal for the greatness of England was the passion of his life." In turning over the pages of those early *Home Letters* from which I have already quoted in connection with Bradenham, I was struck with some of his references to the East in the light of late events. Young Disraeli had seen Gibraltar, Malta, and Corfu; he had roved in Grecian seas when "the dying glory of a Grecian eve bathes with warm light a thousand promontories and gentle bays." He passed through the Dardanelles. "What a road to a great city!—narrower and much longer than the Straits of Gibraltar, but not with such sublime shores." He landed at Cyprus, where he "passed a day on land famous in

all ages, but more delightful to me as the residence of Fortunatus than as the rosy realm of Venus or the romantic kingdom of the Crusaders " ; and for a time Disraeli drank deep of the glamourie of Egypt and the Nile, till " my eyes and mind yet ache with a grandeur so little in unison with our own littleness." Lord Beaconsfield never forgot that tour in the Mediterranean, and in after years Britain was the richer for that memory. The anxious years from 1875 to 1878, leading up to the Berlin Congress, have long since taken their place in history. It was then that he bought the Suez Canal shares, followed by the proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India. A year later saw the British Fleet in the Dardanelles and the Indian troops at Malta, and when, in 1878, he returned from Berlin, bringing " Peace with Honour," the nation learned that he had added Cyprus to the great chain of fortresses on the waterway to India, that he had, in short, stereotyped one of his ideals, " England a great Mediterranean Power." The wisdom of his policy was never more apparent than it is to-day. Now we know what it is to be a great Mediterranean Power, and what other Powers scrambling for the crumbs think of that coveted position. Benjamin Disraeli was the poet transformed into the man of action, and what to others could only be " the consecration and the poet's dream " became through him an accomplished fact.

Returning from Hughenden in the afternoon, I passed through High Wycombe, the scene of Disraeli's early Parliamentary conflicts, and stopped at its stately parish church—the cathedral of Buckinghamshire it

has been called. When I reached the old Bucks farm-house, my temporary resting-place among the hills, the owls were calling to each other, and in the wood the cushats were crooning to sleep. Forty miles away to the south-east beyond the Chilterns a long, luminous cloud, resting, it seemed, on the top of the slumbering hills, reflected the lights of London.

VII

NOVEMBER DAYS: SOME AUTUMN MEMORIES

November days are drear and cold,
All Nature seeks its winter fold.
 Ah, where are now the hopes of Máy ?
 Where the bright suns of yesterday ?
Gone where a thousand suns have roll'd,
Gone to some dim mysterious wold:
While Clytie mourns with grief untold,
 And golden Autumn turns to grey
 November days.
But let not these sad musings mould
Our thoughts, as if a death-bell knoll'd;
 By Winter fires sweet visions stray,
 We dream again of Arcady,
And old romances bathe in gold
 November days.

A. G.

NOVEMBER DAYS:

SOME AUTUMN MEMORIES

And autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves.

Tennyson.

ALREADY we are in the grip of winter. Looking northward in mid-October, we could see from our hill-side that on Ben Ledi lay patches of snow, hardly to be distinguished from the lights and shadows of distant cloudland. Yet another week, and Allermuir looked cold and grey in its dripping garments of sleet. The leaves are strewn thick in the garden paths in a glorious disorder of russet and gold, and even the flowers of autumn are "sicklied over with the pale cast of thought," as if they felt that they had outlived their time. Only the Michaelmas daisies and the chrysanthemums try bravely to hold their own. Here and there across the garden the latter wave their feathery blooms, varying from white to yellow, from pink to deepest damask, from golden brown to bronze, their mellow tones harmonise with the sober hues, the quiet pleasures of dim November. Save for them,

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose.

Yet winter has her compensations even in a garden. It is then that we appreciate the glories of moonlight. Not till the end of August do we begin to remember

what we owe to the orb of night, and, wayward as is our Scottish weather, there are times when the moon shines forth in all her splendour, glistening frost-like on the sleety hill-side and on the leaves of the evergreens. The garden paths are steeped in a mysterious radiance of moonlight and atmosphere, and here a week or two ago in this sheltered nook, nestling beside some bramble leaves, were four ox-eye daisies, wistfully gazing with their great snow-white petals at the silver moon—the last of all their company. They still linger waiting for their sisters of the garden, the chrysanthemums—waiting for the inevitable,

> For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
> These early November hours.

These two lines are quoted from Robert Browning's poem *By the Fireside*, beginning :—

> How well I know what I mean to do
> When the long dark autumn evenings come.

If only we could do it, and not merely dream of doing it—but there's the rub ! And so, after studying Corot-like effects in a moonlit garden, we are forced to admit that old Sarah Battle was right when she believed in a clear fire and a clean hearth. If such worldly comforts are good as accessories to whist, they are not to be despised in a November evening, when, dozing lazily over a book, we think of other days in the autumns of the past.

It has been my experience that the most memorable days of a holiday have often been those that immediately preceded the homeward journey. I always remember a visit to Galloway and the long walk by Loch

Ken to Dalry on one of the last days of September, when the sun shone down on the placid lake and on the old Castle of Kenmure with all the glory of mid-summer. On another occasion, after a rainy holiday in the Western Isles, the steamer rounded the Mull of Kintyre and passed up the Clyde amid a blaze of sunset splendour, gilding the Ayrshire coast-towns with the light that one thought " never was on sea or land." I still remember, too, the penultimate morning of a sojourn in the Highlands of Perthshire. The trailing clouds of mist are rising ever so slowly from the dense woods on the northern side of the glen, beyond which the distant peaks are imperceptibly stealing into our ken. To the south-east the sun is steeped in a luminous mist, like a glory shadowing the unseen; and, amid this changing panorama (to quote from an old sixteenth-century poem written by one of the Humes of Polwarth) :—

> Sae silent is the cessile air
> That every cry and call,
> The hills and dales and forest fair
> Again repeats them all.

There is a haunting beauty about that first line. It recalls the morning stillness of the Highlands. How far the sound travels amid such surroundings! There are voices calling far up the mountain-side. " The cock's shrill clarion " and the watch-dog's bark come up to us from the little town beneath, and you can hear the clock in the church tower striking the hour of nine.

Perfect September mornings! How they stand out

from other days. In the pressure of business you may pass them by unheeded, or if you momentarily note their beauty as you turn to your daily task you think of them somewhat in the mood of George Wither when he wrote :—

> Shall I, wasting in despair,
> Die, because a woman's fair ?
>
>
>
> If she be not so to me,
> What care I how fair she be ?

a sound maxim truly when duty calls, but when you are off the fang let that morning beauty sink into your soul. We may leave the analysis of beauty to metaphysicians ; sufficient for us if we can enjoy it, and happy are they who in the enjoyment of natural scenery have the same catholic taste as Charles Lamb had for books. For as there is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon, so one may cherish never-to-be-forgotten memories of storm-vexed isles and snow-clad peaks as strangely fascinating in their loneliness as that mysterious " peak in Darien " ; and yet at other times dream of quiet English lanes, old-world English villages, and ancient shrines built by the Normans. Such a mental picture is before me as I write. It is once more a morning in September when the white haze rises from the spectral trees, when the distant Chilterns to the south are still bathed in atmosphere. The warm September sun is beating down from a cloudless sky, and the pollarded willows in the meadow beneath have circular shadows where the cattle rest. The depth of the shadows indicates the strength of the sunshine ; the deeper the shadow,

the more restful the shades. Even in the more distant meadows the trees are reflected on the green grass as in a lake. The finest views in Buckinghamshire are to be seen from this ridgeway. Between us and the Chiltern Hills is undulating country, and along the lesser eminences the trees stand out in relief—here a group of poplars, there the square white tower of a parish church against a background of elms, and often a disused windmill. When the old windmills are in use they turn so lazily " in the cessile air " that their very motion is restful—it is the movement of a lullaby. Thus there are pictures at every turn. An old shepherd comes along the ridgeway leading his flock. Leisurely they follow him nibbling at the ample grassy margins by the way or at the hedges. One picturesque " Oxford Down " is garlanded with trailing brambles that stick to his woolly coat. Over the hedge the harvest is garnered and the farmer drives his team afield, sometimes four horses in tandem yoked to the plough and three to the harrow.

The meditative mood is all very well, but I must be up and doing. It was not long, therefore, before I had overtaken my patriarchal friend leading his flock. My path led me through Waddesdon Manor park, dominated by the great French château of one of the many Rothschilds. Joining the Aylesbury road at Waddesdon village, I turned westwards, for I had learned that some miles off there stands an ancient farmhouse called " Shakespeare House," which in olden times was known as The Olde Shipe Inne. Why an inn in Buckinghamshire should be called " The Olde Shipe " is a Shakespearian problem to be classed with

the exploits of the mariner in *The Winter's Tale*, whose ship had touched upon the deserts of Bohemia. The house is situated in the village of Grendon Underwood, just off the great highway leading from London through Aylesbury, Bicester, and Banbury to Stratford-on-Avon, and the local tradition is that at this hostelry Shakespeare, like old Falstaff, used to take his ease at his inn.

Fully a mile beyond Waddesdon I observed a signboard on my left bearing the interesting inscription, "The Hay Binder's Arms." I stopped involuntarily,



"THE HAY BINDER'S ARMS."

for there was no house to be seen, but leaning over the gateway that breaks the hedge I discovered at some distance an old farmhouse surrounded by pollarded willows and backed by tall elms. It formed an ideal

picture for an artist. Blue smoke was curling lazily upwards behind the willows, a horse was nibbling at a thorn hedge, and the path through the gateway was lost in the grass of the meadow. It seemed doubtful whether any thirsty wayfarer ever passed through that gateway. " Rum place for a ' public,' ain't it, sir ? " said a cheery voice behind me. Some descendant of Christopher Sly on the tramp seemed to think that he had divined my thoughts. Walking silently along the grassy margin of the highway, he had come upon me unawares. We chatted pleasantly, with that fellowship which is part of the charm of the road ; and, as we were going different ways, I gathered that Christopher intended to drink my health in a tankard of English ale at the next village. Neither of us, at all events, cleared up the mystery of the Hay Binder's Arms ; it seemed rather a question for the College of Heralds. There was more substantiality about the next hostelry. It was the typical roadside inn, full of colour and not without some life. With its red-tiled roof, with its mellow walls of faded red and yellow, its blue signboard, and the great oak tree in front of the door, it composed beautifully, just, indeed, as if it had stepped out of an old coaching print. The signboard itself was a masterpiece in its way. It bore the following legend :—

Mary Uff
Sells good ale
And that's enough.
A mistake here
Sells foreign spirits
As well as bere.

"The Crooked Billet" is a well-known hunting rendezvous, once patronised by Royalty, so 'tis said, but I resisted Mary's enticing invitation—I was full of visions of some possible successor to Shakespeare's "Olde Shipe" at Grendon Underwood. "A mistake here," as Mary says; it has just occurred to me that Christopher must needs have passed Mary Uff's before he accosted me. Ah, well! there are tramps and tramps, some with the Lavengro spirit in them. Your merry tramp goes all the day, while one is tempted to refer your whining mendicant to the nearest poor-law official. I have hopes of meeting Autolycus next. But to return.

Grendon Underwood is a long straggling village, embosomed in trees, and situated in what was once the old forest of Bernwode. Most of its cottages are thatched, and, indeed, Shakespeare might have lived in any one of them, judging from their antiquity. A well-filled stackyard near the church at the north end of the village indicated the quondam Olde Shipe Inne. The central part is still used as a farmhouse, but the wing to the left, a three-storied gabled house, is fast becoming a ruin, picturesque in its decay with its high-pitched roof, tall Elizabethan chimneys, and brick-and-timber walls intersected by great black beams. In the ground floor there is a large room in which many a merry company must have met in the olden times. Its features are a Tudor doorway and ingle-neuk, and a window filled in with lozenge-shaped lattice-work, containing a shield in the centre. Mounting an old oak balustraded staircase, the steps of which have fallen away so that you ascend at your peril, the



"THE OLDE SHIPE":

A traditional haunt of Shakespeare.

farmer will show you the room, lit by a small oval window in the gable, where, tradition says, Shakespeare slept. Across the road from "Shakespeare House" is the parish church, of the usual Buckinghamshire type, a simple nave and chancel, and battlemented square tower, with corner turret. Its porch was taken down in 1833, and with it disappeared another link with Shakespeare, for the local story has it that on one occasion Shakespeare himself fell asleep in the porch, and was rudely awakened by the village constables—the village Dogberry and Verges. It was doubtless in these early strolling days that Shakespeare met the rustic types that he afterwards immortalised, the laughing rogues that enrich his pages with their irresistible humour, and serve as a foil to his splendid historical pageantries.

Thus even in the dim November days I am dreaming of the old paths. It is good that it should be so; good for us that such visions sometimes flicker in the winter firelight in dull November days, if only you have in your heart, as Henley puts it, "some late lark singing," if only you have imprisoned there some of the summer sunshine, "the joyous blessed sunshine of the past."

VIII

EVENINGS IN ARDEN: A SHAKESPEARIAN REVERIE

Now am I in Arden.

"*As You Like It.*"

EVENINGS IN ARDEN:

A SHAKESPEARIAN REVERIE

MY latticed window looked out on a small orchard, beyond which, under a long, low bridge, crept an osier-bordered stream that in a few miles would mingle its waters with Shakespeare's Avon. The bridge itself was dated 1600, the very year in which *As You Like It* was entered in the Stationers' Registers. Across the bridge lies one of those ancient, red-bricked, red-tiled, sleepy little towns situated in what might be called the purlieus of the Forest of Arden; and on this side, the King's highway winds o'er hill and dale to Stratford-on-Avon itself, some seven miles distant.

Here in the very heart of Shakespeare's home country one cannot help seeking to view the landscape through Shakespeare's eyes. The surrounding orchards, for example, remind one of Justice Shallow's garden. "Nay, you shall see mine orchard, where in an arbour we will eat a last year's pippin of my own graffing, with a dish of caraways, and so forth. Come, cousin Silence! and then to bed." Nay, not to bed, your worship, just yet. In this restful old cottage, amid the "sweet influence" of a Shakespeare-haunted land, what more natural than that one should linger for a while over the sayings and

doings of Rosalind, the peerless Rosalind? The Forest of Arden may have become only a memory, but still to us, after a summer day's ramble in leafy Warwickshire, it is not so difficult amid the quiet of evening to repeople its glades with all the goodly company that circled round the banished duke, when they did "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world." "There is a man haunts the forest, that abuses our young plants with carving Rosalind on their barks; hangs odes upon hawthorns, and elegies on brambles; all, forsooth, deifying the name of Rosalind." And no wonder, my saucy Rosalind! Did not one Thomas Lodge so describe your excellences that Will Shakespeare was tempted to weave around you his immortal pastoral?

"The blush that gloried Luna, when she kissed the shepherd on the hills of Latmos, was not tainted with such a pleasant dye as the vermilion flourished on the silver hue of Rosalind's countenance; her eyes were like those lamps that made the wealthy covert of the heavens more gorgeous, sparkling favour and disdain; courteous and yet coy, as if in them Venus had placed all her amorets, and Diana all her chastity. The trammels of her hair, folded in a caul of gold, so far surpassed the burnished glister of the metal as sun doth the meanest star in brightness; the tresses that fold in the brows of Apollo were not half so rich to the sight, for in her hair it seemed love had laid herself in ambush, to entrap the proudest eye that durst gaze upon their excellence."

This is Lodge's vision of Rosalind, printed in 1590.

What Shakespeare afterwards did was to breathe the spirit of life into that beautiful picture, so that every word Rosalind utters pulsates with all that is noblest and tenderest in woman. At no time is this more apparent than when in the guise of a youth and as Celia's guardian, the distressful Rosalind bravely seeks to play the man. And yet these were merry days withal under the greenwood tree. " Sing, heigh ho ! unto the green holly ! "

> Good morrow, fair ones. Pray you if you know
> Where in the purlieus of this forest stands
> A sheepcote, fenc'd about with olive-trees ?
>
> *Celia.* West of this place, down in the neighbour bottom :
> The rank of osiers, by the murmuring stream,
> Left on your right hand, brings you to the place.

In such fashion did these Elizabethan Arcadians inquire their way in the Forest of Arden. The philosophical Jaques may remark that " the way is as plain as way to parish church," but in the dim forest solitudes the way was not always so plain, and considering the pranks of some " night tripping fairy " or the more serious depredations in such places of Falstaff's companions, " Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon," as he euphemistically calls them, it were well to know how to address a stranger in these parts. So, at least, thought Shenstone during his frequent journeyings through Arden, and he, too, being a bit of a philosopher, once made some experiments so as to ascertain, as he puts it, " the compellations with which it is proper to address those he happens to meet by his way." He tried such expressions as " honest

man," "honest friend," and "friend," with varying degrees of ill-success. One wayfarer suffered him to plunge headlong into a brook amid peals of laughter; another rustic Arcadian "directed me to follow a part of my face, which I was well assured could be no guide to me." With the caution of a confirmed bachelor, Shenstone dreaded the consequences of calling a girl "sweetheart" instead of "madam." (Picture the very precise Mr. Shenstone meeting Rosalind in doublet and hose. What a delightful cross-examination she would have given him!) At last he hit on the expedient of saluting the next man he met as "sir," and obtained all the information he desired. Poor Shenstone! Student of Shakespeare as he was, he must have felt deeply pained to find that the Arden of the eighteenth century differed so much from that of the sixteenth, as much, indeed, as his time differs from ours. Alas! The philosophies of Jaques and Touchstone are now out of date, the spirit of modernity has long since breathed through the shrunken woodlands.

Amid these pleasant musings I had forgotten about the open casement. The night was dull, but a waning moon behind the clouds dimly lit the Stratford road. In relief against the shadowy distance a few yards from the window rises a Lombardy poplar. ('Tis ninety-three feet high, mine host tells me. I could discern it three miles distant, towering above the surrounding orchards.) In the evening air its graceful top seemed to touch the heavens; but even as I look out, a strange unrest begins to take possession of the noble tree. The slumbrous whisperings of its shining

aspen-like leaves gradually give place to a sound like that of the Atlantic on the surf-beaten shores of " my ain countree." The Stratford road is now blotted out. The darkness deepens ; louder and louder roars the blast as it rushes past that old poplar. There is something uncanny about its height as one listens to the great wave-like surging sound, now rising, now falling. " And this is in the night, most glorious night " in Arden ! Oh, Rosalind ! Oh, Celia ! Surely it did not often blow like this in the autumnal woods of your time. Now the lift is rising again, for I can once more see the way to Stratford. The wet road reflects the stormy sky, and had a forlorn traveller passed along in these eerie midnight hours he might have been mistaken for King Lear on the heath, as the old man eloquent addressed the elements :—

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks ! rage ! blow !

For two days the local Press was full of the storm, and there were leading articles on the vagaries of the British weather. It has come to this, that those quondam pastoral swains of Arden, Corin and Silvius, William and even Audrey, poor Dorothy-draggled-tailed Audrey, may now read in their morning papers an account of the storm that devastated their woodlands. Again the note of modernity ! But, notwithstanding, England is still Shakespeare's England, still " our sea-wall'd garden " of which he was so proud.

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Since I wrote the above I have seen Stratford-on-Avon. For a time I loved to dally with the pleasures of anticipation, to think of the great shrine as Words-

worth thought of Yarrow unvisited ; but the Stratford road is mysterious no longer, save at the midnight hour. One Sunday morning I rambled through an undulating land of green pastures, bordered with oaks and dotted with Elizabethan cottages, a land of hanging woods in which the cushats were crooning. Here at last is Stratford-on-Avon ! As I stand on the sixteenth-century Clopton Bridge for the first time on a perfect summer's day, the Shakespeare Memorial and the Church of the Holy Trinity are silhouetted against a cloudless sky. The sun is almost overhead, and reflected as a glistening ball on the placid waters of the Avon beneath. The green meadows and the grand elms surrounding the Holy Trinity are soothing to the eye. Never shall I forget my first morning service in the parish church of Stratford. The cathedral-like church is crowded, but yonder, separated by the sanctuary rails, yonder in the noble chancel with its great emblazoned perpendicular windows, rest the remains of all that was mortal of William Shakespeare waiting for the fullness of the time.

> So sepulchured in such pomp dost lie
> That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

Presently, with one great jubilant note, the whole congregation, led by the surpliced choir and great organ, burst into the *Te Deum Laudamus*, sung to Woodward's music. Now joyfully triumphant, now tender as the Song of Simeon, that grand old hymn sounded the heights and depths of devotional worship. To quote the words of our late Laureate Alfred Austin :



THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, STRATFORD-ON-AVON :

Shakespeare's shrine.

Nor need you then seek, far and near,
More sumptuous shrines on alien strand,
But with domestic mind revere
The Ritual of your native Land.

The object of this paper, however, was to record only the evenings spent in Arden, not the days. "Many can brook the weather, that love not the wind," says the curate in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and so we were not sorry when Nature returned to her more tranquil moods. In those peaceful evening hours the Stratford road shone once more with a dim luminosity, "the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow," and the floor of heaven was again "thick inlaid with patines of bright gold." Looking out from the lattice, the poplar still commands the prospect, and one can just make out Charles's Wain to the left, and to the right the constellations of Cassiopeia and Perseus. Low down on the horizon the Pleiades faintly twinkle, faintly because in a few minutes more an orange-coloured half-moon, the waning moon, steals up the eastern sky, becoming more and more silver-like as it slowly rises to the zenith. My dreamy casement window was dreamy once more, and no longer, as in the height of the storm, did it suggest Keats's

Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Rather did it resemble the balcony of Juliet. In such a night did Jessica trip to meet her lover Lorenzo. 'Twas such a night as this on which Orlando, for we must not forget we are in Arden, would call the "thrice-crowned queen of night" to be a witness of his love. Shakespeare's night! It was because he had

seen the beauties of sunrise and sunset, the waxing and waning of the moon in beautiful Warwickshire, that he was able to write not only as the poet of court, camp, and grove, but also as the poet of Nature. Here, in Warwickshire, Nature is never far distant. She lifts her veil shyly and blushingly to those who would look upon her chaste face. (Surely there was a slight splash in that deep, silent river, a few yards from the window, close to that " rank of osiers." Was it a trout, or but the blob of a water-vole ?) And now the clocks in the neighbouring town are striking the hour of midnight. What a delightful sensation it is to listen to them one by one! I believe the old grandfather's clock downstairs led the ball. The dear old fellow must have been a trifle fast, notwithstanding his years, a quarter of a minute perhaps. Then came the unmistakable chimes from the old parish church tower across the river, followed by more distant chimes coming from whence I cannot tell. The same thing is happening at the present moment in other country towns and villages ; but, ah ! the difference. Is not this Arden ? Is not that the road to Stratford-on-Avon ? So would we dream and dream until

> Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
> Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

IX

WITH SOMERVILE IN ARDEN: AN IDYL OF THE HUNTING-FIELD

With hound and horn, o'er moor, and hill, and dale,
The chase sweeps on ; no obstacle they heed,
Nor hedge, nor ditch, nor wood, nor river wide.
The clamorous pack rush rapid down the vale.

Grahame's "Rural Calendar," October.

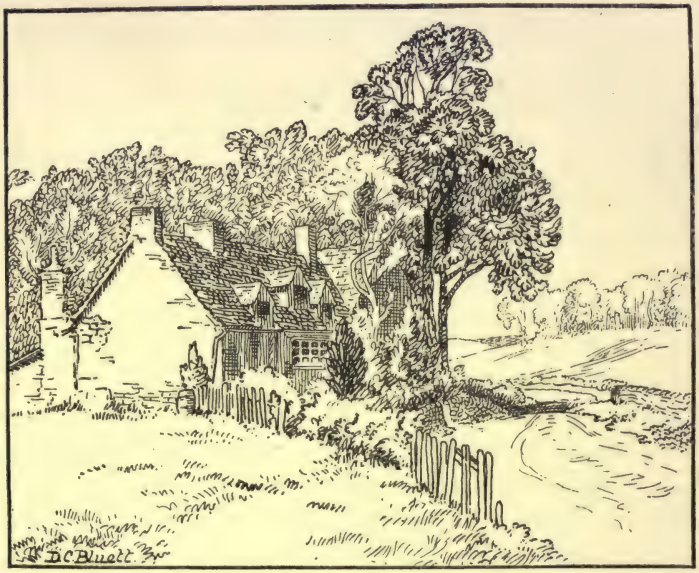
WITH SOMERVILE IN ARDEN:

AN IDYL OF THE HUNTING-FIELD

THERE was hunting in Arden when Rosalind wandered through its forest glades in doublet and hose, and when lords in exile discussed the chase from the point of view of the "poor sequestered stag." There was hunting, too, in Arden when one Christopher Sly, a tinker with aristocratic pretensions, used to call at the hostelry of Mistress Marian Hacket, "the fat alewife of Wincot," or Wilmcote. Even after Shakespeare's time this particular corner of Warwickshire continued to be identified with sport, for here lived and died William Somervile, the sportsman-poet of England. The coach road from London to Birmingham passes close to the parish church of Wootton Wawen, where he rests, and the milestone at the bridge of Wootton informs us that we are exactly one hundred miles from London, two miles from Henley-in-Arden, and six miles from Stratford-on-Avon. Thus the very milestones are reminiscent of Shakespeare, and we pass English lanes with finger-posts inviting us to Warwick, Hampton Lucy, and Wilmcote, the early home of Mary Arden, Shakespeare's mother. But though we are in the heart of Arden, our present pilgrimage is not to the great shrine at Stratford-on-Avon. An

interesting minor poet of Arden claims the tribute of a more than passing reference.

William Somervile of Edstone was a fine old country gentleman all of the olden time—something of the



MARY ARDEN'S COTTAGE, WILMCOTE.

school of Sir Roger de Coverley, with a strong dash of Squire Western. But whereas Addison and Fielding gave us types, Somervile gave us himself. Born at Edstone Grange, near Wootton, in 1677, and educated at Winchester, and New College, Oxford, Somervile combined with his fox-hunting instincts the literary culture of the reign of Queen Anne. Dr. Johnson wrote of him that " he was distinguished as a poet, a gentleman, and a skilful and useful justice of the

peace." This country squire gathered about him a small coterie of local literary friends—Shenstone, and Lord Bolingbroke's sister, Lady Luxborough, among the number. When Joseph Addison purchased an estate in Warwickshire, Somervile wrote a poem congratulating him on his choice of a district

> Distinguish'd by th' immortal Shakespeare's birth ;

and now

> Ardenna's groves shall boast an Addison.

He also wrote eulogies on Pope and Thomson. As the representative of one of the oldest families in England, he dispensed hospitality on a lordly scale, and in the end, in return for timely pecuniary help, he left the reversion of his estates of Edstone and Somervile-Aston in Gloucestershire to Lord Somervile, the Scottish representative of the same old Norman family. Meantime this Warwickshire squire's poems percolated to Scotland, and Allan Ramsay, recognising in the poet a kinsman of his patron, sent him a laudatory epistle. Somervile returns the compliment, telling him how, " near fair Avona's silver tide," he reads to delighted swains Ramsay's jocund songs and rural strains. He then goes on to say what longings he has felt

> to view those lofty spires,
> Those domes, where fair Edina shrouds
> Her towering head amid the clouds ;

but that the journey was too serious an undertaking in those early eighteenth-century days. Ramsay replies by inviting him north in summer-time, while " Caledonia's hills are green," and assures him of

a welcome "To Ed'nburgh and the Land of Cakes."

I doubt, however, whether he would have exchanged his life in Warwickshire for the northern capital, and it is a curious coincidence that among his poems there is one addressed to a Dr. Mackenzie, who had evidently worked his way into the affections of his Warwickshire patients. (His name, by the way, occurs also in Shenstone's *Letters*.)

> But still the heart is true, the heart is Highland,

and doubtless the Scottish doctor had some thought of returning to his native land, and thus gave Somervile occasion to write a poem that was at once a graceful tribute to a beloved physician and a reflex of the poet's own kindly soul :—

> O thou, whose penetrating mind,
> Whose heart benevolent and kind
> Is ever present in distress,
> Glad to preserve and proud to bless :
> Oh ! leave not Arden's faithful grove,
> On Caledonian hills to rove ;
> But hear our fond united prayer
> Nor force a county to despair.

With these impressions of the man, I turn to Edstone Grange and to the poem by which he is remembered, *The Chace*. 'Tis a pleasant country round about Edstone, and it retains many features that would be familiar to Somervile two hundred years ago. The old parish churches of the district would differ little. This, too, is a land of timbered cottages of the Elizabethan age, the spaces between the oaken beams some-

times filled in with brick and sometimes with wattles and clay like basket-work, and yet there they stand, their general effect softened by time until every gradation of colour is represented on their venerable walls. Under certain atmospheric conditions they burn and glow like leaves in autumn. Where so little has changed it is unfortunate that the Edstone Grange of Somervile's time has given place to a modern mansion with classic porticoes. But the old elms that surround the house look as if they belonged to the earlier period. There, too, close by the house, is Somervile's brook. It still flows on as of yore, chattering merrily over its pebbly bed, with eddies here and there where one would fain cast a fly in the hope of catching a trout. The trees by the brook are all old and weather-beaten —oaks, thorns, and elms. Yonder a heron rises above the trees in Somervile's own demesne—descendant—who knows ?—of the noble bird that he apostrophises so beautifully in his *Field Sports*, when mighty princes did not disdain to wear

> Thy waving crest, the mark of high command.

On this September day there is the soughing of the east wind, a kindly, cooling east wind that is welcome. Here in this great silent park, overlooking the spot where the cattle come to the brook to drink, here is the place to turn over the pages of Somervile's *Chace*. You note the date of its publication, 1735, and then you glance at his old-world preface, in which he cites ancient authorities such as Xenophon, Pliny, Oppian, Gratius, Galen, Nemesianus ; and when he has thus sufficiently convinced his reader of the dignity of his

subject, the old Adam bursts forth in his last paragraph.

" But I have done," he says, and jolly glad he was to be done, I fancy. " But I have done. I know the impatience of my brethren, when a fine day, and the concert of the kennel, invite them abroad. I shall therefore leave my reader to such diversion as he may find in the poem itself."

And so we come to " the poem itself." To give it a more literary flavour Somervile enters into the history of hunting and the modes of hunting abroad, for which he received the encomiums of Dr. Johnson. To-day, however, we are more interested in the poem in so far as it illustrates English sport in the eighteenth century.

> First let the kennel be the huntsman's care,
> Upon some little eminence erect,
> And fronting to the ruddy dawn ; its courts
> On either hand wide op'ning to receive
> The sun's all-cheering beams, when mild he shines,
> And gilds the mountain tops. For much the pack
> (Rous'd from their dark alcoves) delight to stretch,
> And bask, in his invigorating ray :
> Warn'd by the streaming light and merry lark,
> Forth rush the jolly clan ; with tuneful throats
> They carol loud, and in grand chorus join'd
> Salute the new-born day.

Apart from the poetic diction of the period, this is a pleasing picture. It is an autumn morning in Warwickshire. There has been just a touch of frost during the night ; but the warm September sun soon dries up the moisture on the grass, and we seem to see the foxhounds coming out into the courts, stretching their legs and simultaneously opening wide their jaws in that

long-drawn yawn that clears away the cobwebs of the night. Now we're ready for anything, they seem to say. Breakfast first, and then—" Hark together! hark! and forrard away!"

Somervile was a sanitarian: he believed in cleanliness, and in practical fashion points out the advantages of plenty of water. Again and again he discusses the welfare of the pack. Be kind to the dogs, is his motto; when the weather is unsuitable for hunting, he counsels the enthusiast, " Kindly spare thy sleeping pack in their warm beds of straw." On such days he recommends his " Brethren of the Couples " to spend their precious hours in study. Somervile expects the followers of the chase to be gentlemen in every sense of the word, and he is particularly hard on the "bounders" (to use a modern expression) who sometimes haunt the hunting-field. Because a man loved horses and rode to hounds, Somervile saw no reason why sport should absorb his whole attention, to the exclusion of mental accomplishments—culture, in short—and the work that lay to his hand.

> Well-bred, polite,
> Credit thy calling. See! how mean, how low,
> The bookless saunt'ring youth, proud of the skut
> That dignifies his cap, his flourish'd belt,
> And rusty couples jingling by his side.
> Be thou of other mould; and know that such
> Transporting pleasures were by Heav'n ordain'd
> Wisdom's relief, and Virtue's great reward.

It was a saying of Somervile's friend Shenstone that " the world may be divided into people that read, people that write, people that think, and foxhunters."

Somervile did his best to modify this humorous estimate, if possible, by judicious blending.

But away with such sentiments and aphorisms on this fine hunting morning. Now our sportsman-poet is in the saddle. Men, horses, and dogs participate in the " universal joy." The harvest is gathered in, and the contented farmer courteously levels his fences and joins in the common cry. The description of the hunt is perhaps the finest passage in the whole poem. All is life and bustle, till

> The welkin rings, men, dogs, hills, rocks, and woods,
> In the full concert join.

On, on they go, and well away. The hunters shout, and the clanging horns swell their sweet, winding notes. On through a village the rattling clamour rings, out into the open again, and as the hunt flies past,

> The weary traveller forgets his road,
> And climbs th' adjacent hill; the ploughman leaves
> Th' unfinish'd furrow; nor his bleating flocks
> Are now the shepherd's joy; men, boys, and girls,
> Desert th' unpeopled village.

I recollect standing on such a hill on the borders of Worcestershire. Looking westward there was a great expanse of tree-fringed meadows and tree-crowned heights, until the horizon was bounded by the dim haze of the distant Malverns. As my local gossip pointed out with genuine enthusiasm, why, from this spot you can see the hunt working for " moiles an' moiles." So it was in Somervile's day; so it is still. The whole village seems somehow to be well up with the hounds, for in every village there are some old peasants, enthusiastic sportsmen, who in their War-

wickshire dialect will tell you which way the fox is sure to go and where he is most likely to be run to earth. And then when all is over the farmer calls the hunt to a "short repast." He himself passes round in ample measure the home-brewed ale, while

> His good old mate
> With choicest viands heaps the liberal board.

But the hunt is not always o'er hill and dale, or skimming with "well-breathed beagles"[1] the distant Cotswolds near Somervile's Gloucestershire estate of Somervile-Aston. The deep, sluggish streams of Arden are still the haunt of the otter, and in Book the Fourth, Somervile describes an otter hunt. Just as Reynard is the terror of the farmyard, the otter is the midnight poacher of the stream. All is fish that comes into his net, the ravenous pike, the perch, the yellow carp, the "insinuating" eel, and

> The crimson-spotted trout, the river's pride
> And beauty of the stream.

Once more the air resounds with melody. The harmonious notes float with the stream, and the otter hounds :—

> Now on firm land they range, then in the flood
> They plunge tumultuous ; or thro' reedy pools
> Rustling they work their way,

[1] The adjective is Somervile's ; and no doubt Young, the Vicar of Welwyn, in his satire *Love of Fame*, refers to Somervile when he writes:—

> The Squire is proud to see his coursers strain
> Or *well-breath'd beagles* sweep along the plain,

and goes on to satirise the country justice whose country wit "shakes the clumsy bench," and whose "erudition is a Christmas-tale" :—

> Warm in pursuit of foxes, and renown,
> Hippolitus demands the "sylvan crown."

storming the otter's citadel, some hollow trunk or spreading roots beneath the surface of the stream.

Thus passes the glorious September morning. I have long since left the brook at Edstone Grange, and the pathway now leads through the meadows to the sedgy banks of the river Alne, fringed with osiers, as Shakespeare takes care to tell us, and dotted here and there with pollard willows or giant oaks. In the middle distance stands out in relief the beautiful church of Aston Cantlow with its square embattled tower, and in front the river is glistening in the sunshine. Somervile's sounding iambics are still ringing in my ears. But hark! surely the sound is more than imaginative. Surely that is the distant sound of a horn. A faint halloo is borne down the stream, and, yes, is not that the music of the pack? The effect is somewhat stagey, I must admit, reading Somervile's *Chace* by his own meads and streams, to the music, it would seem, of his own invisible otter hounds. Who knows who may be present amid this ghostly company?—perhaps Rosalind! or at least Cicely! She would be sure to come over from Wilmcote with the village lads.

But it was neither imagination nor a spectral hunt after all, for here they come across the meadows, stalwart huntsmen armed with staves and dressed in the blue serge knickerbocker suit and red stockings of the otter hunt, with the otter paw or pad as a badge on their caps; and ladies, too, with their smart short skirts—happy, healthy English gentlewomen: the women you meet on a Highland moor in August tramping the heather with their sportsmen friends: women who can throw a fly or play a salmon as skil-

fully as their husbands or brothers. And the dogs? Aye! here they are, with their long ears and rough coats dripping—serious-looking animals who gaze up into your face with such solemn, wistful eyes. It was all so strange, this sudden bustle at the mill, the *al fresco* luncheon in the meadow by the millstream, and the sound of merry voices after the morning's day-dreaming.

Luncheon over, on went the merry party, working the streams lower down the river toward Alcester. Into the distance died away the sound of the cheering voices, the huntsman's horn, and the concert of the kennel, and all was quiet again as I turned to Wootton Wawen Church. Shrines of petrified poetry, I have elsewhere called these parish churches of England. Such is Wootton Wawen. You enter a building that has been consecrated to the service of God for well-nigh a thousand years. It is true that in the history of the universe a thousand years are as one day; but a thousand years to us practically embrace the whole history of our native land. Wootton Wawen is thus not merely a pre-Reformation church, but it dates back beyond the Norman Conquest. Originally a Saxon church, with no form nor comeliness save its primitive simplicity and massiveness, it extended down through the centuries into a nave and south aisle to the west, and chancel and chantry chapel to the east. Saxon, Norman, Early English, Decorated Gothic, Perpendicular, and Flamboyant are all represented in Wootton Wawen Church, until now it stands an epitome of the history of English ecclesiastical architecture.

Here is the shrine of Somervile, the poet of *The*

Chace. Here he was buried in 1742, at the age of sixty-five. Unconsciously treading on the very blue-stone slab beneath which he lies, one steps reverently backwards to read the epitaph that he himself penned. It is written in Latin, but has been Englished thus :

" If you see anything good in me, imitate it. If you discover anything bad, shun it with your very best endeavour. Remember that, though young, you may be on the verge of death. You must die. Trust in Christ."

As you read these thoughtful lines, his personality seems to stand out stronger than ever. Only a minor poet whom nobody reads, the last of an ancient race, tall and fair, with that kind of aristocratic beauty of countenance such as we associate with the features of Claverhouse, but without the latter's traditional cruelty, for a warmer-hearted man than William Somervile never breathed,—we seem to see him in his prime, the dashing horseman heading a cry of hounds, or with his spaniels starting the whirring pheasant during his morning walk. Then in later years, shadowed as he was by pecuniary difficulties, we recall his own picture of himself retiring to his old elbow chair, and in half-humorous, half-serious fashion upbraiding it for looking so spruce in its new cover, " a very beau," confessing that in his youthful days he loved it less, but now !—

> Here on thy yielding down I sit secure,
> And, patiently, what Heaven has sent, endure ;
> From all the futile cares of business free ;
> Not *fond* of life, but yet content to *be ;*
> Here mark the fleeting hours ; regret the past ;
> And seriously prepare to meet the last.

Somervile compares himself to an old pensioned sailor, secure from the buffetings of the storm, meditating alone

> On his great voyage to the world unknown.

His wife had predeceased him, leaving no issue. His favourite huntsman and butler, James Boeter, died as the result of an accident in the hunting-field (and Somervile had written his epitaph), to be followed to " the world unknown " by another old huntsman and servant, Hoitt by name.

> Here Hoitt, all his sports and labours past,
> Joins his loved master, Somervile, at last ;
> Together went they echoing fields to try,
> Together now in silent dust they lie.

With such chastening thoughts and impressions the pilgrim leaves this old Saxon shrine, silently eloquent with the memories of a thousand years. After all, what was the life of the poet to this venerable building, this mother church which had nourished, it may be, generations of Somerviles for centuries before he was born ? Stately mural monuments, recumbent effigies, even the modest slabs that pave her floors, tell us that he was only *one* of her children. But to us so many are but names—albeit some are honoured names in England's history—that we give them little more than a passing glance. To us this is the shrine of Somervile, and the human interest attaching to the sportsman-poet reigns supreme.

X

FROM ARDEN TO ARCADY:
A RAID INTO SHENSTONE'S COUNTRY

The pilgrim that journeys all day
 To visit some far-distant shrine
If he bear but a relic away
 Is happy, nor heard to repine.

Shenstone's "Pastoral Ballad."

FROM ARDEN TO ARCADY:

A RAID INTO SHENSTONE'S COUNTRY

> To catch soft hints from Nature's tongue,
> And bid Arcadia bloom around.
>
> *Shenstone's "Pastoral Ballad."*

THIS was William Shenstone's mission. For this he spent his life and fortune. He was among the last of the Arcadians of the classical school, for the advent of Gray, Cowper, and Burns proclaimed the dawn of a new era in poetry, when the shadowy groves were no longer to be peopled by the pagan followers of Pan. Born in 1714, when the conventional pastoralism of the seventeenth century still lingered, Shenstone himself had a genuine appreciation of Nature, and although he adorned his grounds with memorial obelisks and urns, grottos and alcoves, he is now remembered as the founder of English landscape gardening rather than as a poet of Arcady. He died a beggar in order to turn his farm, The Leasowes, at Hales Owen, near Birmingham, into one of the "show" places of England. To quote George Gilfillan, "as Augustus boasted that he found Rome brick and left it marble, so our poet found his property a mass of commonplace confusion, and left it a garden of Alcinous." In this respect he recalls Sir Walter and Abbotsford, and,

indeed, in the autobiographical introduction to *Rokeby* we find Scott's own confession : " I can trace even to childhood a pleasure derived from Dodsley's account of Shenstone's Leasowes, and I envied the poet much more for the pleasure of accomplishing the objects detailed in his friend's sketch of his grounds than for the possession of pipe, crook, flock, and Phyllis to boot." When Horace Walpole made Strawberry Hill famous he experienced Shenstone's joy, but he soon became tired of the endless round of sightseers and the consequent invasion of his privacy. " It is," he writes, " as bad as keeping an inn."

Shenstone was not only a typical Arcadian, he was also a minor poet of Arden. Indeed, it was during my pilgrimage to the great shrine at Stratford-on-Avon that I visited the lesser shrines associated with Shenstone and Somervile, the sportsman-poet of England. In the preceding paper I described the Warwickshire homeland of the author of *The Chace*, and in this paper I wish to confine myself to a sentimental journey from Arden to Shenstone's Arcady. It was at Wootton Wawen Church, wherein Somervile lies, that I first joined the great coach road from London to Birmingham. On a fine autumnal morning I rested on a low parapeted bridge into which was built a milestone, dated 1806, bearing the following directions :—

To London, 100 miles.
Stratford-on-Avon, 6.
Henley-in-Arden, 2.
Birmingham, 16.

Beneath the bridge flowed that slumbrous English stream the Alne. I love that stream; it has crossed my

path in so many places during its course of seventeen miles until it joins the Arrow at Alcester, and thenceforth flows majestically to lave, with the parent stream, the walls of Shakespeare's resting-place. At Wootton the river is dammed back to feed a flour-mill, and here the purple cranesbill gave colour to its grassy margins. The poplars grouped as of yore, and below the bridge stood an angler. How often have I seen similar pictures in other provinces of Arcady.

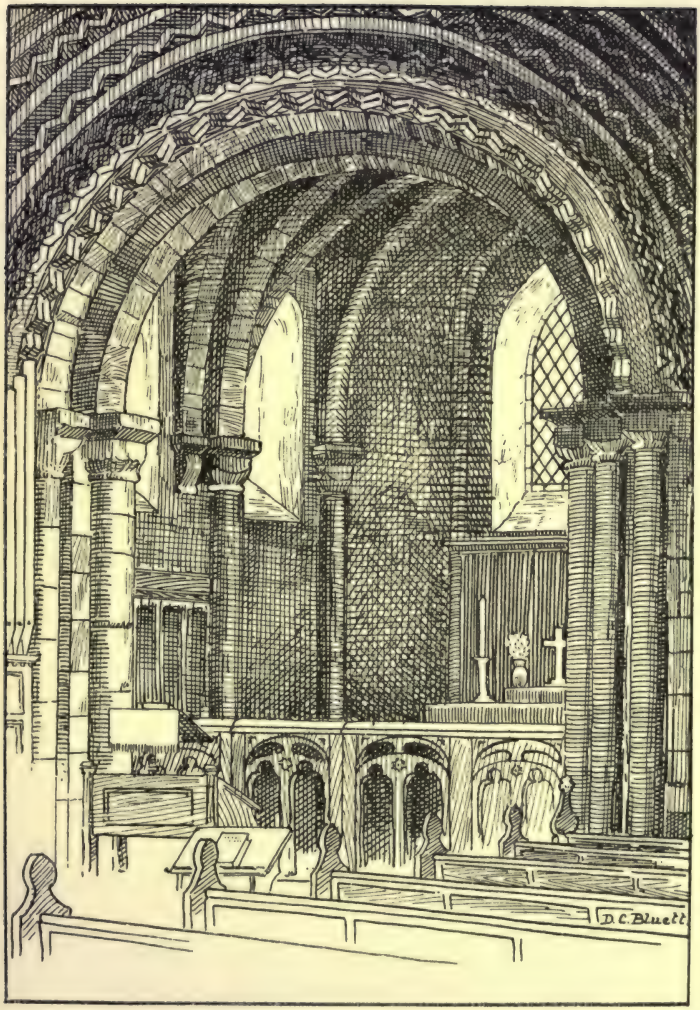
Henley-in-Arden might be considered the frontier of Shenstone's country. It consists of a long street composed of old-fashioned hostelries left high and dry save when visited perhaps by the Birmingham tripper. The crack of the whip and the echoing horn of the old coaching days are heard no more, but now in a whirlwind of dust the motor " toots " past. Hither, in the eighteenth-century days, Shenstone often came to visit his patroness, my Lady Luxborough, sister of the great Bolingbroke. It was during that ever-delightful ramble in a post-chaise to Oxford, Stratford, and Lichfield in 1776 that Johnson and Boswell drove through Arden, the occasion when the old Doctor exclaimed, " Life has not many things better than this ! " At Oxford, you remember, they put up at " The Angel," but they were invited to dine with the Canon of Christchurch. " Sir," exclaimed the Doctor to Boswell, " it is a great thing to dine with the Canons of Christchurch." On their way to Stratford they dined at a wayside inn, and there Johnson " expatiated on the felicity of England in its taverns and inns. . . . You are sure you are welcome ; and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the

more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. . . ." He then repeated, with great emotion, says Boswell, Shenstone's lines :—

> Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
> Where'er his stages may have been,
> May sigh to think he still has found
> The warmest welcome at an inn.

That night, the 21st of March, 1766, they spent at the inn at Henley, where Shenstone was understood to have written the above lines.

Amid the multiplicity of old coaching inns in this corner of Arden he would be a bold pilgrim who attempted to identify at a single visit by a house-to-house visitation the particular inn to which Shenstone refers. More than one was pointed out to me. Prudence would certainly suggest that the inquiry, if called for, should be spread over a considerable period ; and so I gave up this interesting bit of antiquarian research, in order to visit the Norman church of Beaudesert. The pilgrim might easily miss this church, for the feature of the main street of Henley-in-Arden is the embattled tower and crocketed pinnacles of the church of St. John the Baptist. Close to the latter a cross-street, or lane rather, leads eastwards to the Alne, now a tiny stream, and across the bridge is this parish church of Beaudesert, the stream being the boundary between the two parishes. The church at once recalled our own grey Dalmeny, both in size and treatment, save that the former has a western tower, but, ah, the difference ! The English church has been judiciously restored, where necessary ; the chancel and



BEAUDESERT CHURCH, WARWICKSHIRE:

A litany in stone.

apse are furnished in keeping with its architecture in a spirit in which reverence and art combine to make it what it is, a litany in stone. You have only to visit Dalmeny Church, one of the most interesting specimens of Norman architecture in Scotland, and grind your teeth as you look into the little parlour, cut into the north wall, with its commonplace chairs, sofa, and looking-glass. When I remember Dalmeny, I can even forgive Stoke Pogis for its harmless, if ostentatious, display of the Penn chairs. At Dalmeny there are still to be seen the two steps leading to the apse, now, alas ! furnished with pews, some of them necessarily semicircular in shape to fit in with the apsidal configuration. The magnificent vaulting, with its zigzag or chevron mouldings, remains, but stone shafts have been cut away wherever they interfered with the pews, and as you look eastwards beyond those mutilated shafts your vision is bounded by the occupants of the apse facing westwards from their " coigne of 'vantage." To be confronted by a row of spring bonnets where you expect to contemplate the holy symbols of the Most High is, at least, disconcerting. It is only when you stumble across an old parish church like Beaudesert that you realise what might have been. Here in Shakespeare's Arden, as you lift the latch of the wire-screen in the north porch, you remember Rossetti's lines—

> Having entered in, we shall find there
> Silence and sudden dimness, and deep prayer
> And faces of crowned angels all about.

The " Rambler in Arcadia " must be pardoned if he is discursive, for 'tis his nature to be so. He is a true

saunterer : he cannot pass a byway, such as that which led to Beaudesert, without wishing to explore it. Is it not sufficient to know that I am in Shenstone's country ? Besides, I am not expected at The Leasowes among the " genteel company of which this season has afforded me at least an equal share with any that went before "—to wit, my Lord Duke and her Grace of Richmond, the Earl of Bath, the Earl and Countess of Northampton, Lord Mansfield, and so on until you come to commoners like Mr. Pitt's nephew. Poor Shenstone ! As Gray read his Letters at the time of their publication, it seemed to him that this poet of Arcady only enjoyed his paradise when people of note came to see and commend it.

But Henley, though situated on the great highway to the Midland capital, is not in a direct line with Hales Owen, and so the pilgrim must either find his way north-westwards by cross-country roads, retrace his steps, and go by rail, or make Hales Owen a separate pilgrimage. On leaving Henley you leave Arden and the charm of picturesque Warwickshire. Further north you begin to feel that you are approaching the Birmingham zone. At the village of Northfield, some six miles from Hales Owen, I was again attracted by an old English parish church, partly Norman, partly early English. It was surrounded by ancient elms, and its yews alone testified to its antiquity. As I entered through a porch of oaken beams embowered in roses I noticed that the sanctuary lamps in the chancel were kept burning even in daytime.

From Northfield the pilgrim's way led uphill and down dale, past tree-fringed cornfields and meadows.

Now the road narrows into a winding lane, bordered by oaks and brackens, where at a sudden turn of the road you must stand aside to give way to the lumbering English wain drawn by horses in tandem, returning from the harvest field. Beneath the hedges, the faded leaves of violets and foxgloves were reminiscent of spring and summer. The great ruins of the old Premonstratensian Abbey were the first indication that I was approaching The Leasowes. Little is left of this monastic building. Its ruined walls are now used as supports for the great barns of a farm, and one of its Gothic arches forms a picturesque entrance from the farmyard to the farmer's garden. In England there are such things as ruined abbeys, after all, mainly due to the policy of our first " Defender of the Faith "—the irony of it ! To Shenstone the proximity of the ruined abbey was an ever-present factor in his secluded environment, and as I wandered through the farmyard, once consecrated ground, I thought of the lines with which the poet concludes his poem, *The Ruin'd Abby* :—

> While thro' the land the musing pilgrim sees
> A tract of brighter green, and in the midst
> Appears a mouldering wall, with ivy crown'd
> Or Gothic turret, pride of ancient days.

Shenstone, from his sunny southern slopes, could look down on the fishponds of the monks of Hales Abbey, as if they formed part of his property. At another bend of the road I caught my first glimpse of the white house of The Leasowes, a comparatively modern building, not the Tudor farm of Shenstone's day. In a few minutes more I was startled by a sign-

board at the entrance to a bosky lane, indicating that The Leasowes was now " a Physical Training College for Women Teachers." The literary pilgrim will face a great deal to visit the particular shrine to which he has turned his footsteps, but he is not always prepared to face an array of

> Sweet girl-graduates in their golden hair,

engrossed in the study of " Ling's Swedish System," physiology, pathology, vegetarianism, and the laws of health. It was all very well for Tennyson to write :—

> At break of day the College Portress came ;
> She brought us Academic silks, in hue
> The lilac, with a silken hood to each,
> And zoned with gold ; and now when these were on,
> And we as rich as moths from dusk cocoons,
> She, curtseying her obeisance, let us know
> The Princess Ida waited.

As I clambered up the hill to " The College," I looked ruefully at my travel-stained garments. In due course I reached the entrance, rang the bell, delivered a message to the " College Portress," and was ushered into the presence of the " Princess Ida." The scene was changed indeed. I had expected to meet a modern successor to kind-hearted Mrs. Arnold, Shenstone's housekeeper, followed by half a dozen chickens, " poor pretty *creters*." But I had " the Princess " to deal with, and I recollect that as I sat in her sanctum my first impressions were that I should not mind having a course of " Ling's " Swedish drill under such tuition, although I might kick at the " nut foods made digestible by scientific preparation." The inquiring look

of the Lady Principal, however, dispelled such frivolous thoughts, and I proceeded to explain my intrusion. My lady seemed surprised to learn that Shenstone's name, not to say his fame, had reached Scotland, and I ventured to remind her of Burns's admiration for the poet of The Leasowes. After conducting me round the principal schoolrooms, " the Princess " very courteously gave me directions how best to inspect the grounds. Notwithstanding the charm of her presence, I left her with a feeling almost akin to disappointment that one so debonair should have an imperfect sympathy for the *genius loci* of her own domain. What would my Lady Luxborough have thought of it all!

But time was pressing. It would have been interesting to have followed either Dodsley's route round the " ferme ornée," as Shenstone called it, or in the footsteps of Hugh Miller in his pilgrimage somewhere about 1845. Ascending the hill at the back of the house by a more direct path than the orthodox route, I lingered for a time by the side of one of Shenstone's chain of artificial lakes. On its tiny island there was still to be seen amid yews and rhododendrons the brick foundations of a grotto. A quiet and beautiful spot it still is, even amid its neglect. It was for one of his root-houses, in what he called " Virgil's Grove," that the poet wrote the verses beginning:—

> Here in cool grot and mossy cell,
> We tripping fawns and fairies dwell.

Thousands, to whom Shenstone's verses are otherwise unknown, have sung or listened with delight to their musical setting composed by Lord Mornington, the

father of the great Duke of Wellington. Alas! the fairies that frisked under the limes and near his crystal stream are no more. Great Pan is dead, and the Strephons and Corydons, the Damons and Phyllidas, with their Doric pipes and crooks and kids, have changed their ways. When Hugh Miller visited this very spot, for he too refers to the " forlorn brick ruin," he kept a sharp look-out for those pastoral nymphs, and at last discovered " Cecilia, a ruddy blonde, fabricating tackets, and Delia, a bright-eyed brunette, engaged in heading a double-double." I was fortunate in meeting the debonair " Princess Ida." With all his love of a conventional pastoralism, of which people were beginning to tire, Shenstone was nearer the truth when he confessed:—

> 'Tis not th' Arcadian swain that sings,
> But 'tis his herds that low.

Up the stream I proceeded. Here were yews now strangely out of place in this neglected wilderness; there, some Scots firs; and yonder, a group of four stately beeches. When I reached the top of the hill I was disappointed to find that a haze shut out Shenstone's glorious vistas, which Dodsley extols so much. Down again by ferny ways I retraced my steps. As the grounds of The Leasowes lay beneath, it required little discernment to see that the trees had been grouped by a master-mind. I noted particularly the fine effect of the Scots firs, with their deep red boughs. Shenstone believed in vistas with a glimpse of the ruined abbey or of the spire of Hales Owen Church appropriately framed in greenery.

Grand and gloomy is the parish church of Hales Owen, with its great Norman arches, its embattled tower, and lofty spire. It presents a Gothic exterior, owing to the addition of chapels and aisles in later times; but amid its pillared colonnades of massive Norman work there dwells a perpetual twilight until the eye becomes accustomed to the dim religious light. As if in keeping with its mediæval atmosphere, there is preserved a list of vicars and canons of Hales Owen since Robert de Crowle, first vicar, 1232. Shenstone is buried just outside the church. His grave is distinguished by a plain upright stone and recumbent slab, the stone simply bearing his name and date, "Ob. 11 Feb. 1763, Æt. 49." At the west end of the church a marble mural tablet, surmounted by a plain urn, records his virtues in rhyming couplets, beginning :—

> Whoe'er thou art, with reverence tread
> These sacred mansions of the dead,

and ending with the following tribute :—

> Reader! if genius, taste refined
> A native elegance of mind;
> If virtue, science, manly sense,
> If wit that never gave offence;
> The clearest head, the tenderest heart
> In thy esteem e'er claim'd a part—
> Ah! smite thy breast, and drop a tear,
> For, know, thy Shenstone's dust lies here.

I have dwelt so long on Shenstone's environment that I must leave to another paper a ramble through the poet's works, especially his letters, for, if in his poems he displays his "native elegance of mind," it is in his correspondence that, like Cowper and Gray,

he lifts the veil, and shows us himself silhouetted against a background of eighteenth-century country life. Meantime I must return to Arden, for the day is far spent.

Somehow this ramble in Shenstone's Arcady has partaken largely of a pilgrimage to old churches, for when I reached Northfield once more I had still time to revisit the parish church before being whirled back to South Warwickshire. Here, I thought, Gray's *Elegy* might have been written, and yet this church, like that of the *Elegy*, did not materially differ from hundreds of others. In the twilight the great old yews looked gloomier than ever, and the embattled western tower alone stood out against the dim evening sky. The church was still open. Amid the deepening shadows, three of the seven sanctuary lamps, that I had observed in the morning, sent a fitful gleam across the chancel and shimmered on the Cross on the super-altar beneath the east window. The sanctuary itself was bathed in silence, broken only by the pilgrim's footsteps ; and, as the rood-screen guarding the choir stood out in effective relief, the whole recalled the Apocalyptic vision of the seven lamps " which are the seven spirits of God,"

> That high sacred seven
> Which guard the throne by night, and are its light by day.

I have returned to Arden, and here the sweet influences of Shakespeare, like yonder cluster of the Pleiades, would fain lull me into forgetfulness of the day's pilgrimage. But I must be loyal to Shenstone even in Shakespeare's country ; and so I linger at the

close of the day over the pages of what, after all, Arcadia notwithstanding, appeals to us most—Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*. As a bit of portraiture it is perfect. We see the old dame with her russet stole and kirtle, " her cap far whiter than the driven snow," and her apron " blue as the harebell that adorns the field." You can picture her in summer, seated in her garden hymning Sternhold's metrical version of the Psalms on " Sabbath's decent eve." And such a garden !

> Where no vain flower disclosed a gaudy streak,
> But herbs for use,

herbs of " grey renown," sweet marjoram and lavender, tufted basil and " pun-provoking thyme," " marygold of cheerful hue," and rosemary, sweetest of names ; " that's for remembrance," as both Ophelia and Perdita have reminded us, but who would forget Sarah Lloyd and her old herb garden ? The clocks in the neighbouring country town are once more chiming the four quarters before midnight as I close the book in the house of my pilgrimage, and store up another memory for after years.

XI

SHENSTONE, A POET OF ARCADY

Thou canst not learn, nor can I show
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

Robert Burns.

SHENSTONE, A POET OF ARCADY

THERE is a perennial charm about the familiar letters of the eighteenth century that never fails, and when our legislators overwhelm us in these days with endless schemes of sociological, sanitary, educational, and other reforms, we sometimes marvel to think how far we still seem to be from Utopia. No wonder that by winter fires we try to forget all this huge congestion, and with something like a sigh of relief turn to these old calf octavos in their faded gold. Some of them may have been written in troublous times, but you view the battle afar off down a long perspective of years, and an old-world atmosphere clings to their pages. To you these volumes speak only of " the good old days," and you are in the mood to agree with Joseph Addison's immortal fox-hunter, that there has been no good weather since the Revolution. You listen complacently to his garrulous talk of " the fine weather they used to have in King Charles the Second's reign." Fox-hunters were inclined to be Tories, Shenstone tells us. In the epigrammatic passage, already quoted, he went a little further when he said that " the world might be divided into people that read, people that write, people that think, and fox-hunters." Of course, Shenstone ought to know, for one does not forget that his literary godfather

was William Somervile, the fox-hunting squire and poet of Arden, who did all three, as well as ride to hounds. In course of time it fell to the youthful Shenstone to celebrate Somervile in elegiac verse and commemorative urns, all in the fashion of the days of Queen Anne. Such gentle thrusts as I have noted above are characteristic of Shenstone, as, for example, where in another passage he satirises the subjects sometimes selected by his contemporaries for "occasional poems":

On his dog, that growing corpulent refused a crust when it was offered him.

On an earwig that crept into a nectarine, that it might be swallowed by Cloe. (Happy earwig!)

On cutting an artichoke in his garden the day that Queen Anne cut her little finger.

Such recollections prompt me to take from their place on the bookshelves the handsome volumes published by Dodsley in 1764, containing "the works in verse and prose of William Shenstone, Esq." They in turn recall my own autumnal ramblings in Shakespeare's and Somervile's Arden and Shenstone's Arcady, as described in the preceding papers. The vignette illustration on the title-page is characteristic of the man, a kingfisher standing on the bank of one of Shenstone's streamlets, having beneath, in ribbon or scroll form, the motto—

Flumina amem, sylvasque inglorius.

Alas! This edition of his works was not published until the year after his death. How proud Shenstone was of the kingfishers that haunted his streams! The

little halcyon's azure plume steals into his verses, and is emblazoned on his shield, "*Or*, three kingfishers *proper*," and so on. It has always been a pretty conceit of the poets this dabbling in heraldry. One thinks of Burns's woodlark perched on a sprig of bay tree with the motto, "Wood notes wild," quoted from Milton's reference to "Sweetest Shakespeare" in *Il Penseroso*. Burns's heraldry, like Shenstone's, was elegant trifling. Scott of Abbotsford, as became the founder of a family, took it more seriously with his gay quarterings of mullets and golden crescents.

But I am wandering from Shenstone's letters. Dodsley's collection dates from 1739, when the poet was twenty-five, to 1763, the year of his death. In the second letter of the series we are introduced to his housekeeper, Mrs. Arnold, who took under her motherly wing the whole care of the farm, the chickens, and the calves. Of her kindness as a nurse, "her assiduity to the injury of her health," Shenstone writes as generously as Cowper did of Mrs. Unwin. I expected to meet at The Leasowes an old-world housekeeper with at least a Cranford air about her; but instead, there flashes across my inward eye the very modern vision of the scientific yet debonair "Princess Ida," with a background of "sweet girl graduates" waving some kind of glorified dumb-bells in the interests of public health. Then I am reminded of "the nut foods," and mentally compare them with the menu at "The Angel" or "The Rose and Crown." I wonder, too, if the naileresses are still as pretty as Hugh Miller's Cecilia and Delia; but, of course, Mr. Shenstone could not marry a naileress, and so he

peoples his groves with nymphs that are only to be seen on the canvas of a Boucher or Watteau. He himself remains unwed. Johnson says that he might have obtained the hand of the lady to whom his Pastoral Ballad was addressed. Very tenderly he describes his parting with Phyllis :—

> She gazed, as I slowly withdrew,
> My path I could hardly discern ;
> So sweetly she bade me adieu,
> I thought that she bade me return.

How tenderly, too, he dedicates the beauties of The Leasowes to the lady of his heart :—

> Not a shrub that I heard her admire
> But I hasted and planted it there,

while all the time good Mrs. Arnold had to put up with all manner of discomfort. From Johnson we learn that " his house was mean, and he did not improve it ; his care was of his grounds. When he came home from his walks, he might find his floors flooded by a shower through the broken roof, but could spare no money for its reparation." This certainly was not a home for Phyllida, not a home for " a nymph of higher degree."

" Dr. Nash informs us," writes Isaac Disraeli, " that Shenstone acknowledged that it was his own fault that he did not accept the hand of the lady whom he so tenderly loved ; but his spirit could not endure to be a perpetual witness of her degradation in the rank of society, by an inconsiderate union with poetry and poverty."

And so Shenstone continued, as Johnson tells us in his grand style,

"To point his prospects, to diversify his surface, to entangle his walks, and to wind his waters; which he did with such judgment and such fancy as made his little domain the envy of the great and the admiration of the skilful—a place to be visited by travellers and copied by designers."

The £300 a year left him by his mother—one of the Penns of Harborough—which would otherwise have been amply sufficient in the early Georgian period, was thus sunk in transforming his farm into an eighteenth-century Arcadia. The sequel was inevitable.

"In time," says Johnson, "his expenses brought clamours about him that overpowered the lamb's bleat and the linnet's song; and his groves were haunted by beings very different from fauns and fairies. He spent his estate in adorning it, and his death was probably hastened by his anxieties."

These were the days when men of letters were rewarded with Government posts, but in that direction Shenstone had long looked in vain; preferment never came his way. Referring in a letter, dated 9th July, 1743, to the battle of Dettingen, that had been fought a few weeks before, he slyly asks:—

"What think you of the battle? Are not you so much in love with our King that you could find in your heart to serve him in any profitable post he might assign you?"

The profitable post never was assigned, notwithstanding all the "big-wigs" (I use the term in an

eighteenth-century sense) that visited The Leasowes. " Everyone gets preferments but myself," he writes ; and it must have been with a sigh that, after enlarging on the pleasant possibilities of a dear friend " squatting himself down upon a fat goose living in Warwickshire," while warning him at the same time not to invest in a black velvet waistcoat or breeches on the mere prospects, he proceeds :—

" For my part, I begin to wean myself from all hopes and expectations whatever. I feed my wild ducks, and I water my carnations ! Happy enough if I could extinguish my ambition quite, or indulge (what I hope I feel in an equal degree) the desire of being something more beneficial in my sphere."

The same something wanting in his life reveals itself in his verse as in his prose. " Like some lone halycon " he lived his life at The Leasowes. 'Tis said that if he had lived a little longer—for he died at forty-nine—he would have been assisted by a pension. There was something of the fatalism of the Celt about Shenstone. In turning over the pages of his *pensées*, for they are more of the nature of detached thoughts than of essays, I came across this one. " The words ' no more ' have a singular pathos, reminding us at once of past pleasure and the future exclusion of it." Yes, the pathos of the old Celtic wail,

> Cha till, cha till, cha till mi tuille.
> I return, I return, I return nevermore.

He, too, like Gray, was struck with the Ossianic message, which Macpherson was then delivering to a literary world that did not know what to make of it.

Since I have mentioned Gray, it may be interesting to recall what he thought of Shenstone. Writing to Dr. Wharton in 1758, he says, " There is Mr. Shenstone, who trusts to Nature and simple sentiment, why does he do no better ? He goes hopping along his own gravel-walks, and never deviates from the beaten paths for fear of being lost."

This brings me to the point that what may most interest many of Shenstone's readers are the contemporary references to historical and literary events. With or without a Government post, he was proud of King George the Second at Dettingen. " I find myself more of a patriot than I ever thought I was," he exclaims on reading an account of the battle. He at the same time appreciated the motives of the unfortunate Balmerino as " a friend to the Stewarts, a soldier, and a Scotsman." His hatred of Popery strengthened his loyalty to the Hanoverian dynasty.

" Resistance to the reigning powers," he writes, " is justifiable upon a conviction, that their Government is inconsistent with the good of the subject, that our interposition tends to establish better measures, and this without a probability of occasioning evils that may overbalance them. But these considerations must never be separated."

Lord Balmerio, he thought, was an honest man in other respects.

" One may guess his behaviour was rather owing to the misrepresentations of his reason than to any depravity, perverseness, or disingenuity of his will. If a person ought heartily to stickle for any cause, it should be that of moderation. Moderation should be his party."

Here, at least, was none of the Celtic enthusiasm ; it was the philosophic view of the average Englishmen of the time, the view of the Walpole school, that looked upon " The Forty-Five " as pure Quixotism. It served its purpose if it at least taught Shenstone and others how to pronounce such Scottish names as Cromarty, Balmerino, and Culloden. They did not think that a strain of romantic music and poetry, pitched in the minor key, would encircle the name of Culloden in all time coming. Perhaps they did not know that Pope Benedict, loyal to the descendants of King Charles the Martyr, was praying that the time might come when " we would sing our *Nunc Dimittis* with a glad heart, believing that we saw afar off a happy state of things in that island, which was once called the Island of Saints." Shenstone believed that the success of " the Rebellion " would have meant the restoration of the Church of Rome. Writing under date November 22, 1745, he says :—

" The rebellion, you may guess, is the subject of all conversation. Every individual nailer here takes in a newspaper (a more pregnant one by far than any of the London ones), and talks as familiarly of kings and princes as ever Master Shallow did of John of Gaunt. Indeed, it is no bad thing that they do so ; for I cannot conceive that the people want as much to be convinced by *sermons* of the absurdities of popery, as they do by *newspapers* that it might possibly prevail."

The passages in Shenstone's letters that deal with literature and men of letters partake more of a personal character. How delighted he was, for example, to be able to tell his friends that, as he was returning

last Sunday from church, whom should he meet but that " sweet-souled " bard Mr. James Thomson, " in a chaise drawn by two horses lengthways," and since the author of *The Seasons* has honoured The Leasowes with a visit, Shenstone is " fully bent on raising a neat urn to him in my lower grove if Mr. Lyttleton does not inscribe one at Hagley before me." Nothing pleased him better than a visit from Lady Luxborough; " a coach with a coronet is a pretty kind of phenomenon at my door, few prettier, except the face of a friend such as you." In 1758 another literary Scot called on him—Home, the author of *Douglas*. He records, too, a visit from Warton, the Poet Laureate and historian of English poetry. Apropos of Warton's History, it may be noted also in passing that Shenstone inspired Bishop Percy to publish his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*. After entertaining a larger company than usual, he notes how the silence and solitude are intensified by the sound of the pendulum of his clock. Who has not experienced this sensation ?

> By day its voice is low and light,
> But in the silent dead of night,
> Distinct as a passing footstep's fall,
> It echoes along the vacant hall.

Shenstone all his life was a book-lover. We know from his letters what books he read. He loved what Lamb called his " midnight darlings." He could not be without books ; he must own them. In this he differed from the gentle Cowper, who was content with a loan. If Shenstone was not a voluminous writer, he was, at least, a voluminous reader, though he had not the

erudition of Gray. To use his own expression, his was "the innocent amusement of letters." Indeed, I know no better *apologia* for his own work than the following sentence taken from his observations "on allowing merit in others":—

"We must not expect to trace the flow of Waller, the landscape of Thomson, the fire of Dryden, the imagery of Shakespeare, the simplicity of Spenser, the courtliness of Prior, the humour of Swift, the wit of Cowley, the delicacy of Addison, the tenderness of Otway, and the invention, the spirit, and sublimity of Milton joined in any single writer. The lovers of poetry, therefore, should allow some praise to those who shine in any branch of it, and only range them into classes according to that species in which they shine."

Here we must leave him, a man beloved by his contemporaries in spite of his foibles, one who added a gentle humour to his pastoral melancholy. When from personal experience he pens a poem on "The poet and the dun," he prefaces his lines with the following quotation from Shakespeare:—

> These are messengers
> That feelingly persuade me what I am.

True, Shakespeare did not use the word "messengers," but that is the humour of it. One can imagine the "feeling" epithets applied to the impecunious poet by those "beings," as Johnson called them, whose clamours overpowered "the lamb's bleat and the linnet's song." Shenstone reduced politeness to a fine art; he was so painfully courteous, and yet we can fancy that there was a twinkle in his eye as he solemnly

explained how on one occasion, having lost his way, he tried to discover the exact word to use in accosting wayfarers. As I have already noted in "Evenings in Arden," even he was not altogether happy in his salutations, or compellations, as he more correctly styled them, for when he addressed a man, whom he met, as "Honesty," the fellow in reply "directed me to follow a part of my face, which I was well assured could be no guide to me, and that other parts would follow of consequence."

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well in Hales Owen churchyard, and his epitaph within the church, as we have seen, is singularly graceful. It could not be said that he slept at his post, for his main grievance in life was that he never received one. His works, too, sleep gently for the most part on the shelves of secluded libraries hid away among the stately homes of England. Dodsley's editions still suffice. I should not care to read them in any other, the editions handled by his friends, and by contemporaries, like Walpole and Gray. Johnson's Life of our poet was not unsympathetic, although Boswell complained that the Doctor did not sufficiently admire Shenstone. Burns extolled his verses, and Scott was early attracted to the man, who, like himself, had made the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. Isaac Disraeli wrote a warm-hearted vindication of the poet's domestic life. Gray visited The Leasowes in 1770, and three years later Oliver Goldsmith also made a pilgrimage to the same shrine, ten years after the poet's death, only to find amid its tangling walks and ruined grounds a reflex of his own *Deserted Village*. The estate had been bought by a

button-maker, who clipped the hedges, cut down the gloomy walks, made vistas, not of church spires and ruined abbeys, but of " stables and hogstyes." The next tenant was a sea captain, whose taste lay in Chinese temples and cage-work summer-houses. He thought the place looked lonely, and when this ancient mariner had altered The Leasowes to his mind, " it only wanted inhabitants to give it the air of a village in the East Indies." The poet of Sweet Auburn concludes :—

" Could the original possessor but revive, with what a sorrowful heart would he look upon his favourite spot again ! He would scarcely recollect a Dryad or a Wood-nymph of his former acquaintance, and might perhaps find himself as much a stranger in his own plantation as in the deserts of Siberia."

A hundred years and more have passed since then, and at The Leasowes, Time, the healer, has toned down these later crudities and eccentricities, swept away, too, its memorials of Arcady and Cathay. Nature has returned to her own ; the noble trees that Shenstone planted still adorn his grounds ; and doubtless the halcyon revisits its old streamlets looking for the three kingfishers " proper " that once were emblazoned on the poet's shield. Even " Princess Ida " states in her prospectus that her " College " is situated in grounds of poetic fame in the midst of beautiful woods. She does not mention the poet's name. Possibly, the Lady Principal does not believe in Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, for, after all, Sarah Lloyd may have been a trifle antiquated in her methods. We forgive " the Princess " for her imperfect sympathy ; it is greatly a

matter of temperament. And so once again I replace the volumes, not this time in their temporary resting-place in Arden, but in their permanent home amid the goodly fellowship of other dusty volumes in dim gold, written by Shenstone's contemporaries, whose names I have fondly mentioned in this paper, that glorious company of the immortals who adorned an essentially literary age.

XII

"THE LADIES OF THE VALE"

MEMORIES OF LICHFIELD

A city of Philosophers.

Dr. Johnson.

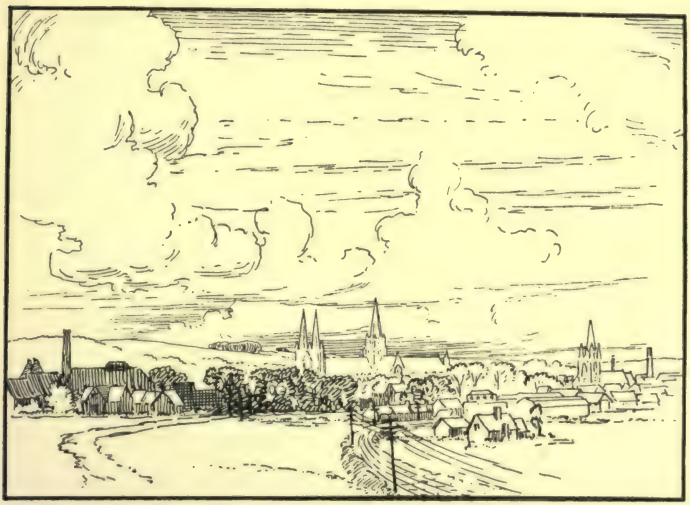
Freedom I love, and form I hate,
And choose my lodgings at an inn.

Shenstone.

"THE LADIES OF THE VALE"

MEMORIES OF LICHFIELD

"HALF-PAST ten, a fine night, all's well!" Such was the cry that rang out into the evening air as a figure with a lantern hurried round the Cathedral close and stopped now and again to pro-



DISTANT VIEW OF LICHFIELD.

claim the hour and the weather to no one in particular. Here was a survival of times past, an answer to the old, old question, "Watchman! what of the night?" After busy days in the metropolis, I seemed to be

suddenly carried back into the eighteenth century at least. On a Saturday evening in late October I arrived at the Trent Valley Station, and, picking out the Swan Inn coach, we rumbled slowly along through the shadows until, like Johnson and Boswell, "we came within the focus of the Lichfield lamps." Two at least of the old inns of Lichfield were associated with Johnson, "The Three Crowns" and "The Swan." It was to the former that Johnson brought Boswell in 1776, when, after a comfortable supper, Boswell tells us that he felt all his Toryism glow in the old capital of Staffordshire, as he offered incense *genio loci* in the form of "libations of that ale which Boniface, in *The Beaux' Stratagem*, recommends with such an eloquent jollity." Here is the passage :—

"'Tis smooth as oil, sweet as milk, clear as amber, and strong as brandy, and will be just fourteen years old, the fifth day of March, old style."

Truly a wonderful ale, friend Boniface, for, a hundred years later, a brilliant Scottish *littérateur* thus apostrophised the creamy foam that topped a flagon of this same Staffordshire ale : "Is it not whiter than Dian's lap, softer than Helen's heart, smoother than the cheek of Cytherea ?" Sir John Skelton was young when he let himself go in this fashion.

It was to "The Swan," however, that Johnson brought Mr. and Mrs. Thrale and their daughter "Queeney" in 1774. While Johnson took Boswell by way of Oxford and Stratford-on-Avon on an ever-memorable journey, the Thrales chose the more direct route by the Holyhead road, old coaching ways familiar to me. They hired fresh horses at "The Mitre"

at Barnet, dined at St. Albans, and spent the night at Dunstable. Johnson occupied the stages reading Tully's Epistles. Boswell had no notes of this journey, but both Mrs. Thrale and Johnson kept brief records, Johnson's very brief, as when he writes : " Wednesday, 6th July.—To Lichfield, eighty-three miles. To the Swan." The journal kept by Mrs. Thrale, which came into the possession of Mr. A. M. Broadley, and has been recently published, gives more details. It was a long stage from Dunstable to Lichfield, and Mr. and Mrs. Thrale were concerned about Queeney, who, however, escaped with nothing more serious than " a slight cold and a sore eye." There was no fear apparently of an old stager like Dr. Johnson, and, like other old stagers, of whom I have read, he appreciated the charm of old-time travel when the dawn would burst along the heath.

" Mr. Johnson," writes Mrs. Thrale, " continued in good spirits, and often said how much pleasanter it was travelling by night than by day. The clock struck 12 at Lichfield soon after we got in.

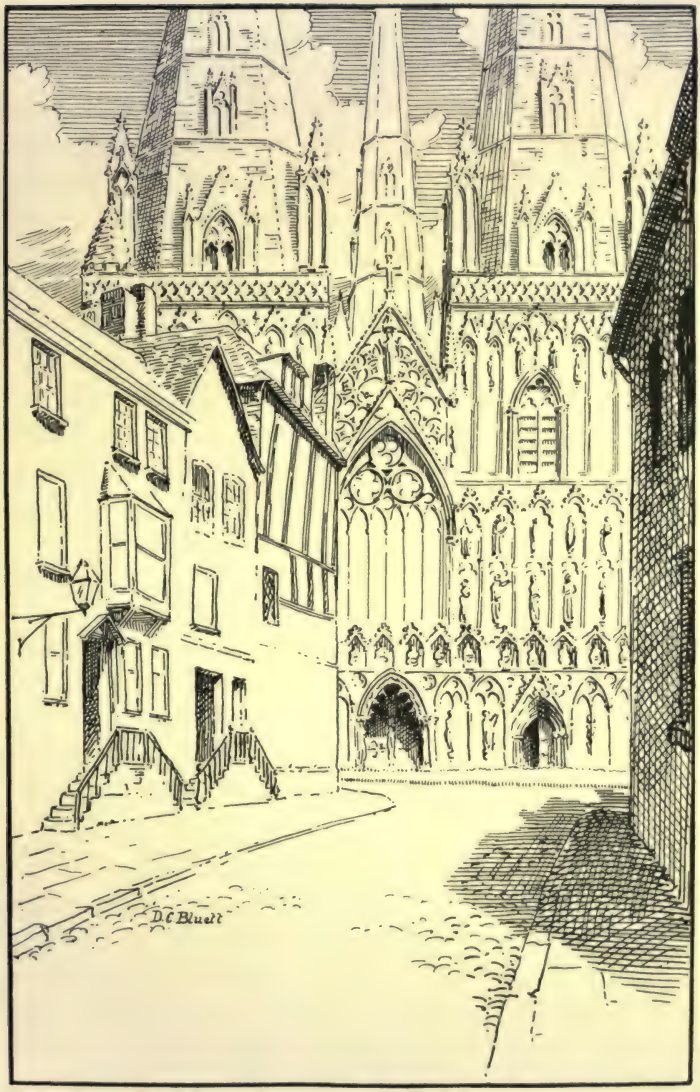
" In the morning of the next day I put off my riding dress and went down to the parlour of the Inn we slept at in a morning gown and close cap, but Mr. Johnson soon sent me back to change my apparel." The Doctor's will was law, especially at Lichfield, and Mrs. Thrale " acted accordingly."

With no small pleasure I found that the maid of the inn had selected for me one of the suite of rooms occupied by the Thrales, a spacious room the two casement windows of which looked into the old inn garden and up to the three beautiful spires of Lichfield Cathedral,

" The Ladies of the Vale," as they are poetically called. The inn itself is said to date as far back as 1535. It is all upstairs and downstairs, connected by long undulating corridors according to the levels of its rooms. Ghostly uninhabited apartments, lit here and there by the lamp lights of the great inn yard, lead one off another until you reach the eighteenth-century ballroom. Here, certainly, was " a pleasing land of drowsihead," whose ancient peace was broken only by the Minster bells chiming the quarters all through the silent night.

Like Mrs. Thrale, nearly 150 years ago, I, too, heard the clock at Lichfield striking twelve, for the open casement windows had a fascination that banished sleep. The moon, obscured by clouds, was nearing the full, and into the grey, luminous sky rose " The Ladies of the Vale," the two florid western spires, dating from the fourteenth century, and their younger sister, the central spire, said to be the work of Sir Christopher Wren, who had been commissioned to replace the original spire, destroyed by a fanatical Puritan. No other cathedral in England can now show such a picture as is here presented—three spires rising up into the midnight air from their pinnacled bases of rich Gothic profusion. Now the chimes have struck the quarter-past midnight, and at half-past twelve I looked out hoping to hear the watchman's voice, but the distance was too great. The clouds have cleared away, and, over the Cathedral, Charles's Wain spangles the sky.

On the Sunday morning the bells of the Minster were ringing their *Laudate Dominum*, praising Him in



LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL: WEST FRONT.

the height. We generally associate old cathedrals with grey-worn towers, silver-lichened ; but here the red sandstone presents a warm, ruddy hue that adds a brightness as of sunshine to the richly decorated façade of the west front, where the niches are once more filled in with effigies of saints and kings. Another feature is the spire-lights, particularly of the central spire. These spire-lights or windows are characteristic of the broach spires of the neighbouring county of Northampton, and while Lichfield has a parapet round the base of the spire, the design of the windows is exactly as in the broach or parapetless spires of the Midlands. The effect, especially of the lower windows piercing the great central spire, is, under certain atmospheric conditions, like the baseless fabric of a vision ; you marvel at its seeming slender foundations.

If the Cathedral is beautiful without, it is all glorious within. The unusually large clerestory windows send a flood of light into the interior ; but down the nave and across the transept, and beyond the low reredos behind the altar, the eye loves to travel to the old painted windows in the apse of the Lady Chapel. At Fairford, the mediæval glass had survived the Reformation and the Civil War ; here, Lichfield owes its Flemish windows to the dissolution of the monastery of Herkenrode, near Liége. The glass, dating from 1534 to 1539, was purchased in Belgium in 1802 and brought to Lichfield. The modern wrought-iron screen and the reredos of marble and alabaster were designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, and so constructed as to intercept as little as possible the vista of masses of deep mediæval blues and golden greys framed into the

shadows of the distant Lady Chapel, an effect that becomes more pronounced as it draws towards evening.

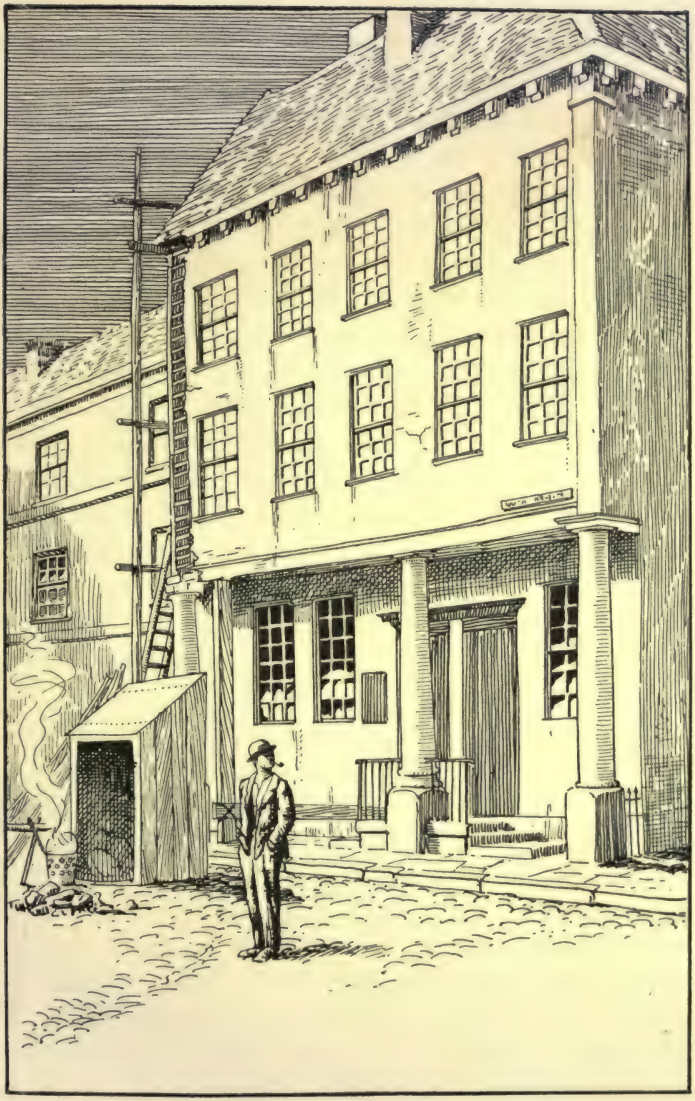
In 1774 the Thrales visited the Cathedral on a week-day; but there was nothing almost that Dr. Johnson could not command in those his later days, and so we are not surprised to read in Mrs. Thrale's diary that "the Cathedral service, where an anthem was sung by Mr. Greene's directions for our entertainment, filled up an hour after dinner very properly." How delightfully illuminative this is in its very frankness. The historic Church of England, the lives of whose good men—Donne, Hooker, Herbert—were traced by Walton with a plume "dropped from an angel's wing," the church of such Restoration prelates as good Bishop Hacket of Lichfield, Jeremy Taylor, Ken, and Stillingfleet, had fallen into the eighteenth-century lethargy: an anthem sung "for our entertainment" by the Cathedral choir "filled up an hour after dinner very properly"! No wonder that in the fullness of the time came the Oxford Movement. Even "James Boswell, Esq., from the Hebrides," as Johnson jocularly designated him, would not have written thus. On Sunday, March 24th, 1776, he writes:—

"I went to the Cathedral, where I was very much delighted with the music, finding it to be peculiarly solemn, and accordant with the words of the service."

"Dr. Johnson went with me to the Cathedral in the afternoon. It was grand and pleasing to contemplate this illustrious writer, now full of fame, worshipping in 'the solemn temple' of his native city."

Evensong is still celebrated in the afternoon, so as

not to interfere with the similar service in the parish church in the evening. I have so often found a wonderful appropriateness in the Psalms appointed for the day in the English liturgy that in beautiful Lichfield it seemed for the moment as if the poet-King of Israel had been inspired by the Minster, when the choir chanted the *Quem dilecta*, the 84th Psalm, "O how amiable are Thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts!" The anthem was selected from the 96th Psalm, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," set to the music of Dr. Hayes. How appropriately both words and music interpreted the beauty of Lichfield! The old Minster has survived all its vicissitudes. It is difficult to believe that civil war thundered in and out the moated close, and that the flicker of camp fires was reflected in the Minster Pool. It has seen its bell tower burned down, its stained glass destroyed, its central spire in ruins, its walls whitewashed. Then came the restoration of Charles II, when Bishop Hacket set to work to repair the Cathedral, a work of eight long years. He lived to re-consecrate the Minster, but of the six bells that he had presented to the Cathedral one only was hung in his lifetime. We are told that "the first time it was rung, the bishop was very weak, yet he went out of his bed-chamber into the next room to hear it: he seemed well-pleased with the sound, and blessed God, who had favoured him with life to hear it, but at the same time observed that it would be his passing bell, and returning into his chamber, he never left it till he was carried to his grave." So passed the good Caroline Bishop. Restorers, judicious and otherwise, have tampered with



SAMUEL JOHNSON'S HOUSE, LICHFIELD

the stones of Lichfield Cathedral, yet to-day it stands as it stood in times past, one of the fairest ecclesiastical heritages in England.

These are memories worth cherishing as we pass into the Cathedral Close, and wander through the narrow eighteenth-century streets to the square, where sits the Doctor among his books, and where Boswell, too, is commemorated in a not very happy statue, notwithstanding his well-powdered wig, his sword, and cocked hat. There was no reason why the sculptor should have infused into his work the spirit of Macaulay. As Mr. W. L. Courtney has pointed out, "The old idea that Boswell was a stupid man has long since been superseded." Jowett, we are told, was fond of saying that Boswell was a genius ; but Jowett's friends rather suspected that he wished he had a Boswell to record his conversation. Be that as it may, that fine old Senator of the College of Justice, Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, had some cause for disquietude in what he naturally considered the eccentric conduct of his son. Boswell one day endeavoured to assure his father that the Doctor was a constellation of all the virtues. "Yes, James," replied Lord Auchinleck, "the Doctor is Ursa Major, and you are Ursa Minor."

But "the hasting day" has run beyond the time of evensong, and I am once more taking mine ease in mine inn, looking up now and again at the moonlit spires, "The Ladies of the Vale." How pleasant it is to muse amid such surroundings, pleasanter still if the Dean of Lichfield of old times could be prevailed on to call and have a quiet chat. How we could discuss the Morocco Question, for example, for was not Dr.

Lancelot Addison, English chaplain at Tangier in the days of Charles II ?—Tangier, " that costly and useless settlement," as Macaulay calls it, which, the great Whig historian notwithstanding, ought never to have been abandoned, for I am one of those who firmly believe in Britain's supremacy in the Mediterranean. Perhaps, too, the Dean might have been accompanied by his eldest son, Joseph Addison, who was born the year before the Dean came to Lichfield. But hark ! The clatter of horses approaching the inn has just broken the silence. Now there is a bustle in the inn-yard. I should not be surprised if the lady that has stepped out of the post-chaise were Mrs. Thrale, another of " The Ladies of the Vale." Thirteen years after her first visit she came again to " The Swan " with her second husband, Mr. Piozzi. The " Great Bear " was rather surly over this love match, but he afterwards made amends with tears in his eyes. And so if Mrs. Piozzi came again to Lichfield, it would still be to " The Swan," and I should wonder whether I might offer Mr. Piozzi some of Boswell's Stafford-shire ale, or whether, to suit his southron palate, I must ask the maid to fetch a cup of rich Falernian, the wine of Horace, or mayhap a pint of port—

> Such whose father-grape grew fat
> On Lusitanian summers.

And Mrs. Thrale ? (For I prefer to call her by that name.) Would she grace our inn parlour once more, the parlour looking out into the garden ? Might we speculate as to whether her modern travelling costume would have pleased the dear old Doctor ! Hester

Thrale could not look other than charming, with the charm that some women, like Diane de Poitiers, never lose. We love to picture for ourselves Cowper's "dearest coz," Lady Hesketh, or Dean Swift's Stella. And so it is with Hester Thrale. By and by I hope to remind her of our old friend with the lantern still going his rounds; and perhaps she might be persuaded to accompany me to the Cathedral Close, up the hill past Davy Garrick's. How daintily she walks! These old-world ladies had to pick their footsteps through many a slough. A Raleigh was not always at hand with his cloak, and thus the dainty manner became natural to them. Yes, madam, time has dealt kindly with Lichfield since you were last here. Like Hester Thrale, the "Ladies of the Vale" are as beautiful as in the olden days; they, too, have never lost their charm and grace; and yonder is the old watchman just passing the doorway of the north transept. Listen! "Half-past twelve, a fine night, all's well!"

XIII

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF "THYRSIS" AND "THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY"

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore
When Thames in summer wreaths is drest,
And oft suspend the dashing oar,
To bid his gentle spirit rest.

Collins.

O ye spires of Oxford! domes and towers!
Gardens and groves! your presence overpowers
The soberness of reason; till, in sooth
Transformed, and rushing on a bold exchange,
I slight my own beloved Cam, to range
Where silver Isis leads my stripling feet;
Pace the long avenue, or glide adown
The stream-like windings of that glorious street.

Wordsworth.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF "THYRSIS" AND "THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY"

THE will-o'-the-wisp personality of Matthew Arnold's Scholar-Gipsy has always been dear to me. Amid the quiet backwaters of rural England you hope some day to meet him, for every lover of Nature who drinketh deep at the elfin springs of English literature is himself a scholar-gipsy at heart. Oh! the joys of the footpath way! Where the bee sucks, there lurk I! Who would not wander, for instance, through the Forest of Arden with that supreme scholar-gipsy, Will Shakespeare, and sleep, as tradition says, in summer nights within the porch of some old parish church, as at Grendon Underwood, on the way from London to Stratford-on-Avon?

'Tis a pleasing fancy that Arnold weaves around the seventeenth-century story of the poor Oxford scholar,

> Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,

not an uncommon experience even at the present day, "joined himself," as it is told in Glanvil's book, "to a company of vagabond gipsies." Oxford, however, had a wistful fascination for the Scholar-Gipsy, as it has had to many since his time. He still haunted the Cumnor hills, the Wytham flats, and the Berkshire moors; and in *Thyrsis* the keynote to the whole poem is the last line:—

> Our scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.

The one poem is not complete without the other. Combined, they take a form, half pastoral, half elegiac, dear to the poets of all time. When Sir Philip Sidney died, Spenser wrote what he called "a pastorall æglogue" to the memory of Phillisides; when Edward King, a brilliant young scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge, was drowned in the Irish Sea, Milton dedicated to him his *Lycidas*, his incomparable poem; even as the death of Arthur Henry Hallam prompted Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. So, too, in *Thyrsis*, Matthew Arnold enshrined the memory of his friend Arthur Hugh Clough. For a prototype of the Scholar-Gipsy, on the other hand, I always turn to the noble closing verses of Gray's *Elegy*, dedicated to the memory of "a youth to fortune and to fame unknown." How we love to follow him if we can, in the early morn,

> Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
> To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

At noontide he is found, like Gray himself, at the foot of a nodding beech, gazing into a brook that babbles by. Later he is seen wandering past yonder wood, muttering his wayward fancies as he roves. Then follows the verse that, to me, seems the very essence of Matthew Arnold's *Scholar-Gipsy*:—

> One morn I miss'd him from the 'custom'd hill,
> Along the heath, and near his fav'rite tree;
> Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
> Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.

We shall see how Matthew Arnold, too, missed his Scholar-Gipsy and his "Thyrsis" by the accustomed

hill, the favourite tree, the upland lawn, and by the skirts of Bagley Wood.

The charm of Oxford never palls. We are not all privileged to be graduates of that great University; rather, as M. Paul Bourget has expressed it, do we love its old walls, because we have only looked at them as backgrounds to our dreams and imaginings. As in a dream, too, we wander amid its mediæval colleges. Like Charles Lamb, we appropriate the tall trees of Christ Church and the groves of Magdalen, and in the vacation "I fancy myself of what degree or standing I please." Sometimes a dim-eyed verger would drop a bow as the gentle Elia passed. Wordsworth slighted his own beloved Cam to range where silver Isis led his stripling feet. John Dryden made the same confession. No wonder, then, that its own distinguished sons never forgot Oxford, that "exquisite place," as Matthew Arnold calls it, "spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the middle age." Oxford, "the adorable dreamer," he continues, "whose heart has been so romantic, who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! Home of lost causes and forsaken beliefs." This is the Oxford of our dreams. "I'll tell you, Scholar," said Izaak Walton, "when I last sat on this primrose bank, and looked down these meadows, I thought of them as Charles the Emperor did of the city of Florence (Florence, where 'Thyrsis' died), 'that they were too pleasant to be looked on, but only on holidays.'" When James Howell visited Florence in 1621 he also recalled the saying, and now I quote

it again and apply it to Oxford, for it is only on holidays that I can visit "that sweet city with her dreaming spires."

At another time, and in another mood, I should have dwelt on Oxford as the adorable mother of John Keble and John Henry Newman, and should have been satisfied to muse on the rich associations of their University Church of Saint Mary the Virgin; but already I have lingered too long if I would follow in the footsteps of "Thyrsis" and the Scholar-Gipsy.

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill,

is the first line of *The Scholar-Gipsy*, and "the call" tears me away at last from the High Street of Oxford in search of the spirit of the wandering scholar somewhere on the upper river. There he had been seen in June above Godstow Bridge, and in June, too, I wandered through acres of buttercups to Medley Weir, past Binsey village, and all that is left of Godstow Nunnery—Binsey, associated with Saint Frideswide, enshrined in Oxford Cathedral; and Godstow, where the good nuns sheltered Fair Rosamond. The fallen May blossom far scattered over the meadows whitened the margins of the quiet backwaters. At Godstow is the Trout Inn, beloved of oarsmen who haunt the upper river, and down a meadow-path, with a vista of green pastures and quiet waters and distant hills, "the warm, green-muffled Cumnor hills," nestles the village of Wytham. Its grey gables, red chimney stacks, thatched roofs embosomed in trees, and square, embattled church tower beyond, make up a perfect English picture. The church is modern, but the win-

dows and much of the timber work were brought from Cumnor Place. The good old roomy inn at Wytham, at the sign of "The White Hart," with its golden coronet round the animal's neck, reminded me of "homely, hearty, loving Hertfordshire." Oxford men delight in telling you of happy days when they would start from Medley Lock for Godstow, and past the Wytham flats to Eynsham and Swinford Bridge. By double-sculling they might reach even Bab-lock-hithe, surely the very sanctuary of the Scholar-Gipsy.

When time and circumstances permit, for few can dispense with "the common task," I am never happier than when on the tramp; there is a charm in the lonely wanderings of the Scholar-Gipsy that is not to be found even in the cultured companionship of a "Thyrsis." When alone you may go where you like, stop where you like. You do not require to talk when you would rather be musing, nor to listen to the irrelevant ripple of the man, however well-intentioned, who does not know when silence is golden at Nature's shrine, when the Lord of Nature Himself is here in His holy temple. I recollect asking one of the kindliest and most cultured of souls what he thought of a district which I cherished as being one of the loveliest in England. "Ah," he said, "we had so much to talk about that I never saw the landscape," a landscape in which every house, every tree, were familiar friends, a landscape through which a river flows to-day, as it has flowed for centuries, not only over its chalky bed, but through the finest pages of our glorious literature! And yet what would life be, what would literature be, without a Thyrsis, or a Lycidas? Even in the grandest

and greatest of books, David's lament over Saul and Jonathan could ill be spared. "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." Similarly we can truly believe that the memory of Milton's morning walks with King around Cambridge, as recorded in *Lycidas*, was as dear to him as Arnold's touching remembrance of Arthur Clough.

> Here came I often, often in old days;
> Thyrsis and I, we still had Thyrsis then,

and here on an April morning I returned to my quest. That there are two Hinkseys every lover of Arnold knows, and from either village you may ascend the poet's loved hill-side.

On that April morning I chose the path from the hamlet of South Hinksey, for it is hardly even a village, a few straggling farmhouses and thatched cottages of grey stone, grey with age like the colleges, and a primitive old church with a square tower. The apple and plum blossoms brightened the orchards, and the graceful daffodils shed their radiance in the cottage gardens.

> Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
> Past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns the hill?

A brooklet comes down the tiny valley, and to the north-east are Oxford's towers, with the amphitheatre of Headington Hill beyond. The slopes of the valley are bright with spring flowers. The stitchwort nestles beneath the bramble, and the cowslips, the Cumnor cowslips that the feet of Proserpine never stirred, have secured immortality in *Thyrsis*. Following the track,



OXFORD'S TOWERS FROM CUMNOR HILL-SIDE.

the blackthorn hedge, white with blossom, the stitchworts, and the celandines are still my companions. Overhead soars the lark, and you stop to watch the voluptuous flight of a pair of wood-pigeons across the valley to Chilswell copse. How tender is the greening of the pollarded willows growing out of the bits of marshy waste. Yonder is the great barn of Chilswell Farm (the " Childsworth " of the poem). The roof is a study in old gold and bronze. Past the farm the brooklet still runs noisily over its flinty bed as it rushes to fill the duck-pond. Up the grassy slope beyond the farm, passing Arnold's " high wood," the gorse is in bloom and the wind-flowers star-spangle the slope.

Rest for a moment on the hill-side and let your eye travel down once more to Oxford's towers. How finely they compose as we see them from this delightful spot, far down beyond Chilswell Farm—the Tom Tower of Christ Church, the classic dome of the Radcliffe Library, the majestic tower of Magdalen, and the florid spire of St. Mary's. For an effective grouping of public buildings along its skyline Oxford has only one rival in the universe, and that is mine own romantic town of Edinburgh, along its historic ridge from the Castle to Holyrood House. But listen ! there is the crow of a cock-pheasant in the copse, accompanied by the see-saw note of the tit. Yonder over the ridge, as I resume my pilgrimage, is Matthew Arnold's famous " signal-elm," responsible for all the personal soliloquies in *Thyrsis*. It is not an elm, by the way, but an elm-like oak, estimated to be two hundred years old. Some have held that the " signal-elm " may have been a tree that formerly stood farther

up the hill, while others have associated the tree with the elm and its attendant firs that form so conspicuous an object on Cumnor Hurst. But the " fir-topped Hurst " is referred to later in the poem, and popular tradition, supported by the opinion of Matthew Arnold's personal friends, points to this lonely tree on the way over Boar's Hill to Wootton as the " signal-elm." Around that tree Clough and Arnold had woven a delightful fancy. As Arnold wandered up the pathway on that night in which the poem opens, after a long absence, he missed the tree.

> Against the west—I miss it ! is it gone ?
> We prized it dearly ; while it stood we said
> Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead ;
> While the tree lived on, he in these fields lived on.

Arnold missed the tree, and he sadly missed Clough. " Thyrsis of his own will went away." It irked him to be here, says his friend ;

> His piping took a troubled sound
> Of storms that rage outside our happy ground.
> He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

Perhaps Clough took the Oxford Movement too seriously, if we may so interpret these lines ; but the son of Dr. Arnold of Rugby was prepared to wait the passing of the storm. In the famous passage already quoted, Arnold speaks of Oxford as the " home of lost causes." In his essay on *Culture and Anarchy* he says " the Oxford movement was broken, it failed, our wrecks are scattered on every shore." Even Matthew Arnold did not live to see the passing of the storm. Its effect for good was a reverential improvement in

the dignity and order of divine service; its less satisfactory effect, perhaps, was, mainly on the part of the clergy, a rigid ecclesiastical isolation in the attitude of the Anglican Church to the other Reformed Churches. With his sincere love for the Church of England, Arnold resented these storms, especially when "Thyrsis" was whirled into the vortex. But "Thyrsis" had not gone over to Rome. The Oxford Movement had rather a contrary effect in his case. Clough's searchings of heart led, we are told, to a gradual abandonment of his early creed. "Thyrsis of his own will went away." He resigned both his tutorship and fellowship of Oriel. He went to Paris, where he met Emerson, and by and by he went to America, where he was again welcomed by Emerson. Later, his friends obtained for him an appointment in the English Board of Education, but it was not for long.

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?

For a time he gave whole-hearted attention to his public duties, and then he was "ordered south," to die, like Keats, in Italy. The passing of "Thyrsis" was a great blow to Arnold, and here in their common haunt he recalls the names of places dear to them both, dear to every son of Oxford—Eynsham, Sandford, over against Iffley, and the Wytham flats. "Thyrsis" is gone, and with the passing of the tree, the spirit of the Scholar-Gipsy haunts the loved hill-side no more. The poet's reverie is disturbed by a troop of Oxford hunters going home. They prefer the bridle-path of the track by Chilswell Farm to the King's highway,

and to avoid their impetuous onset down the hill the poet turns aside into a farther field and sees once more—

> Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
> The orange and pale violet evening sky,
> Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

How he longed to tell "Thyrsis" that the tree still stood, but "Thyrsis" had gone, while the Scholar-Gipsy still haunts these woods and fields. Late in the afternoon I returned to Oxford after my quest.

The next morning I resumed my pilgrimage. Shepherds had met the Scholar-Gipsy on the Hurst in spring; and in spring, too, I thought to find him on the Hurst. This time I took the path by the causeway across the meadows from Osney towards North or Ferry Hinksey, with its quaint old Norman church and ruined cross. Up the hill past ploughed fields and fields green with winter-grown wheat, past gamboge-coloured barns, the path leads to Cumnor Hurst, with its familiar clump of trees, a few picturesque Scots firs guarded by an old elm. The very name "Hurst" has a charm about it reminiscent of the virgin forests of Saxon England. Across the bent there comes "the music of the pack," that reminds me of Somervile, the sportsman-poet of England, and sure enough sheltered beneath the Hurst there are the kennels of a beagle club. The wind-flowers and the Cumnor cowslips still brighten the hill-side, and on the ridge the peewits and whins are a change from the well-ordered meads of the Thames Valley. From Cumnor Hurst half of England seems unrolled before you. How delicate is the shade of blue that on the extreme

western horizon indicates the Cotswolds and Gloucestershire. Yonder runs the Bath road, and to the north-east the Chilterns are shrouded in a dim summer-like haze, veiling many a beloved spot familiar to me amid " the thorny woods of Buckinghamshire." Away to the south I dream of a land where " at some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors " the rustics would meet the Scholar-Gipsy seated on the warm ingle-bench. Alas ! some day there will be no Cumnor Hurst unless prompt measures are taken to preserve this literary haunt, for a large brick-work is eating its way into the side of the hill farthest from Oxford. Surely Oxford will wake up before it is too late. The amenity of the whole countryside from the two Hinkseys, right up to Foxcombe Hill and Cumnor Hurst, should be jealously guarded by all lovers of Oxford.

But I am now within sight of Cumnor Church, recalling a former visit in June, when the vicarage garden was gay with white clematis and red hawthorn. Cumnor Church and Hall have a universal interest, due to the fact that they are for ever associated with the romance of Kenilworth. Sir Walter Scott tells us that Mickle's ballad of *Cumnor Hall*, and especially the first stanza, had a peculiar species of enchantment for his youthful ear, the force of which, as he writes *Kenilworth*, was not even then entirely spent. But no longer does

> The moon, sweet regent of the sky,

silver the walls of Cumnor Hall,

> And in that manor now no more
> Is cheerful feast and sprightly ball.

The manor was razed to the ground, and at the west end of the churchyard, in the wall of which are still to be seen the remains of a fireplace, there is a meadow in which one can trace the ground plan of Cumnor Hall. Yonder is a row of ancient trees, indicating an avenue. In pre-Reformation times the manor belonged to the Abbots of Abingdon, and at the foot of the meadow the fishpond still survives the days when the monks were supplied with fish " on Fridays, when they fasted."

The old church itself, with its square embattled tower, dates from the thirteenth century. It contains the usual " goodly pleasant things " that we look for in an old English parish church—a chained Bible, a Jacobean pulpit, poppy-headed stalls, and a chantry-chapel built early in the fourteenth century, wherein two abbots were buried. Add to these a quaint statue of Queen Elizabeth and a fine memorial tomb on the north side of the chancel containing an ancient brass, on which are written the virtues of Anthony Foster, for the true story of Amy Robsart is wrapt in mystery.

With the brilliancy of that April afternoon the blue of the distant horizon became more intense as I left Cumnor village for Bab-lock-hithe. The path leads through a hawthorn-bordered lane, then through a field-gate, and down the centre of a wide, grassy wilderness, where the track for a horse is alone visible, a bridle-path, in short. Its generous margins would form a veritable paradise for gipsies. Intermingled with the hawthorn not yet in bloom are the earlier white sprays of the blackthorn. I have met this charming blossom everywhere during my pilgrimage.

Here there is pure air, pure typical English country, with nothing around but tree-fringed estates. Again I hear the cheery crow of the cock-pheasant. On this April day I note butterflies for the first time. The larks are everywhere as usual, and now that the sun has burst forth so joyously with a summer-like heat, were it not for the bare elms, one might wonder whether winter ever reigns at Bab-lock-hithe. Passing another gate, I have arrived at "the stripling Thames," meandering through green, lush, smiling meadows. Yes, it is spring at last. The "frail-leaf'd white anemony" is here, and the gorgeous marsh-marigold, and the pollarded willows with their shimmering leaves. Here, too, the west wind blows, and yonder is the new moon, all sweet things. The Scholar-Gipsy might have met that other scholar-gipsy, George Borrow, just at such a spot as this, but instead

> Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
> Returning home on summer nights, have met
> Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,
> Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet
> As the punt's rope chops round.

One might wander on indefinitely through this Arcadian land, for the Thames may be traced far beyond, to where, for example, it laps the walls of sweet Lechlade after receiving contributions from the delightful trouting streams of the distant Cotswolds in John Keble's country. But it draweth toward eventide. The new moon is becoming stronger as the daylight fades, and so after a brief rest at "The Chequers" on the further side of the river I recross the rope ferry.

On the return journey I noted that the bridle-paht was in some places purple with wood violets, and in others like a Scottish moorland road with its grassy bents, Scottish save for the white flints scattered over the rough pathway.

As I reached once more the Cumnor ridge the sun was setting in a blaze of glory over the Cotswolds and beyond the great ocean of level woodlands in the direction of the Bath road. The landmarks of *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar-Gipsy* are like old friends, especially the clump of firs on Cumnor Hurst.

On my homeward way, as I wandered over the Hurst, I returned to the thought that these two poems, like other great elegiac poems, seemed to form the record of a love passing the love of women. Indeed, how little there is of womankind in either poem The references are as shadowy as the groups under the dreaming garden trees, save, perhaps, the reference to the girl who unmoored the skiff above the Wytham flats. If you would learn something of Matthew Arnold's womankind, you must turn to some of his other poems, *Urania* or *A Modern Sappho*—proud Urania with the " gay unwavering deep disdain " of her lovely eyes—Urania, who could love—

> Those eyes declare—
> Were men but nobler than they are ;

and Sappho, whose fickle lover never fathomed the depths of that love with which he was toying, drawn away by a passing fancy of black hair and a wreath of white heather. Arnold's *Sappho* is a noble vignette picture of a great-hearted woman. We can imagine

his type, a woman intellectual and capable, but with a woman's warm heart shining through her every action, a woman filled with a love that is sacred in its purity, a love that has borne the stress and heat of the day. A quarter of a century ago, it must have been, I copied into a scrap-book the following lines :—

> Let her have her youth again—
> Let her be as she was then !
> Let her have her proud dark eyes,
> And her petulant quick replies.
> Let her sweep her dazzling hand
> With its gesture of command,
> And shake back her raven hair
> With the old imperious air.
> As of old so let her be.

These lines from *Tristram and Iseult* still appeal to me. They have Matthew Arnold's note of distinction. They do not necessarily express regret ; for the perfect love grows only deeper with the years ; rather do they seek to cherish and record a pleasing memory of bygone youth. " As of old so let her be ! "

Once more I am following the track " through the moonlight on this English grass." One can pick a line here and there for every stage of this pilgrimage. Cumnor Hurst is now behind me ; The Tree, I know, crowns the hill ; and so the Scholar-Gipsy still must haunt his loved hill-side. What would Oxford be without Matthew Arnold ? It is a wonderful tribute to a modern poet that he should interpret so well the spirit of the place. At last Oxford lies beneath me as I retrace my steps down the slope to North Hinksey Church. Matthew Arnold has been my sole guide

during these pleasant wanderings. Let him describe the closing scene in his own matchless way:

In front
The wide, wide valley outspreads
To the dim horizon, reposed
In the twilight, and bathed in dew,
Cornfield and hamlet and copse
Darkening fast; but a light
Far off, a glory of day,
Still plays on the city spires;
And there in the dusk by the walls,
With the grey mist marking its course
Through the silent, flowery land,
On, to the plains, to the sea,
Floats the imperial stream.

XIV

FAIRFORD AND JOHN KEBLE

THE WINDOWS

Lord, how can man preach Thy eternall word ?
He is a brittle crazie glasse :
Yet in Thy temple Thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place
To be a window, through Thy grace.

But when Thou dost anneal in glasse Thy storie,
Making Thy life to shine within
The holy Preachers, then the light and glorie
More rev'rend grows, and more doth win ;
Which else shows wat'rish, bleak, and thin.

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
When they combine and mingle, bring
A strong regard and aw : but speech alone
Doth vanish like a flaring thing,
And in the eare, not conscience ring.

Herbert's "Temple" (1633).

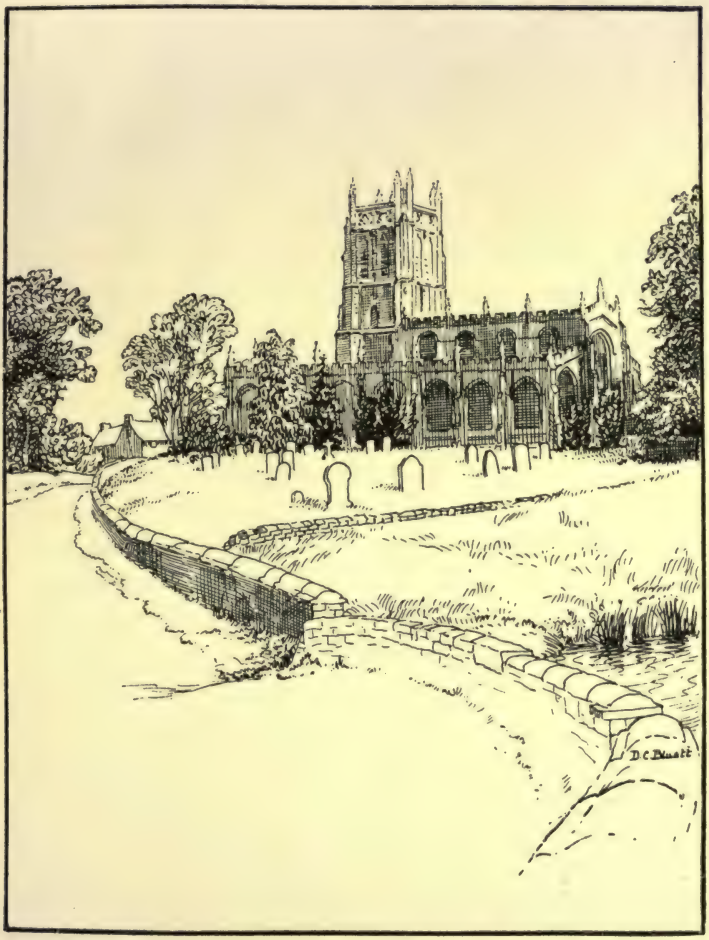
FAIRFORD AND JOHN KEBLE

THE Church of St. Mary, at Fairford, in Gloucestershire, is, like Shakespeare's joyous realm of England, a precious stone set in a silver sea. It dates from the time when the sombre Norman and early English churches, with their dim religious light, were being transformed into the lantern churches of the Tudors, when chancel, nave, and transepts glowed from end to end in golden and jewelled splendour from the great emblazoned windows that were the feature of the Perpendicular period. While the churches survived the storms of centuries and the Civil War, it was not to be expected that the frail memorials in glass of martyrs, kings, and sainted eremites could withstand the pikes and muskets of the Puritans, and so the complete series of mediæval painted windows at Fairford is unique in England, their only rivals being the series at King's College, Cambridge. Where other parish churches must perforce be content for the most part with modern glass, Fairford thus boasts her mediæval ruby-reds and blues, hues of sunrise and sunset, vistas of heaven, and crude, terrible visions of hell, wonderful backgrounds of ancient architecture, pictures of saints and prophets and early fathers enshrined in silver-toned canopies.

Amid these legacies of the past one cannot forget

that Fairford was also the birthplace of John Keble, the George Herbert of the nineteenth century, pastor and poet, retiring and elusive, and yet one of that small band of earnest men who succeeded in shaking the Church of England to her foundations. This was the double interest that prompted me on a bright morning towards the end of May to set out from Oxford for Fairford. Walking up the historic High Street of Oxford it was impossible to pass without the deepest interest the Laudian porch of the University Church of St. Mary, with its twisted pillars like the baldachino of St. Peter's at Rome, a Renaissance porch forming the entrance to a Gothic church, and yet one forgets the incongruity on account of its beauty and associations.

But it is of the Fairford and not the Oxford St. Mary's that I am writing, and so I leave the dream-city of *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar-Gipsy* far behind. Following westward the course of the Thames, I must pass unvisited beautiful Kelmscott, the " earthly paradise " of William Morris. At Lechlade I lingered for a while in the churchyard where Shelley in a calm summer evening in 1815 wrote a poem full of the haunting peace of Collins's *Ode to Evening*, and dreamed of Lechlade spire. This quiet Cotswold village was flooded with sunshine as I leaned over the parapet of its thirteenth-century bridge and rested my eyes on the green meadow-lands of the stripling Thames with its pollarded willows and graceful poplars and a wide vista of flat country beyond, bounded by wooded heights far to the south. On the way to Fairford the great chestnuts were almost regal in their



FAIRFORD CHURCH IN THE HOMELAND OF JOHN KEBLE:

"A precious stone set in a silver sea."

beauty, loaded as they were with their pink-and-white spire-shaped blossoms.

Like Lechlade, Fairford has its little market square and old Georgian inns. Back from the square, and close to the gates of the manor, the church is situated near the banks of the Coln, amid a wilderness of leafy beauty. The church itself is a handsome late Perpendicular structure, dating from the end of the fifteenth century. Its leading external feature is a fine square central tower, crowned with parapets and pinnacles. Even though there were no painted windows at Fairford, the finely carved screens, stalls, and misericordes, all late fifteenth-century work, would have amply repaid a visit. The story goes that the church was built for the windows; that in the fifteenth century John Tame, a merchant, had captured an argosy bound for Rome containing a cargo of stained glass. Tame had already purchased the manor of Fairford, and immediately thereafter began to rebuild the parish church in a style befitting the glorious legacy he proposed to dedicate to the service of the church. This account is somewhat legendary; but the glass, like that at King's College, Cambridge, shows the influence of the Flemish school, with its heavy masses of colour, as distinguished from the delicate silver tones of an earlier period, specimens of which still scintillate from the tracery lights of some old parish churches. The upper lights of the east window are wholly occupied with a painting of the Crucifixion; the lower represents events immediately preceding Calvary. One notes that the crosses are tau-shaped (T), instead of the Latin form. The windows in the north or Lady

Chapel appropriately illustrate the life of the Blessed Virgin, while the south, or chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, is dedicated to the memorable scenes after our Lord's resurrection. In the windows of the nave are represented Old and New Testament types, Moses, David, Solomon, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, the Latin Fathers SS. Jerome, Gregory, Ambrose, and Augustine, and even certain of the Roman Emperors in their rôle as persecutors of the Church.

The west window, the largest in the church, is devoted to a powerful conception of the Day of Judgment. The upper lights of the window suffered from over-restoration, but although this part is modern, the whole effect is very striking. The scheme is Miltonic, —in the upper half, the Empyreal Heaven,

> And, fast by, hanging in a golden chain
> This pendant world,

in the lower half, chaos and " the nethermost Abyss." The Saviour sits enthroned in heaven, with the earth as His footstool. He is surrounded by a wide rainbow-coloured aureole of the hosts of heaven, saints, and angels, and bears in one hand the sword of vengeance, and in the other a lily. The globe on which His feet rest is of deep carmine encircled with clouds. In the lower window, golden steps lead up to heaven. St. Michael, in the lower central light, with wings outspread, and holding the scales of judgment, presides over the eternal destinies. Immortal souls are being weighed in the balance, and those found wanting are consigned to the nethermost Abyss. I hesitate to describe this part of the great window. Those mediæval

priests and painters had no doubt in their own minds as to the awful realities of everlasting torment. Here there is none of the Miltonic sublimity of the fallen archangel about Satan. Hades is an underworld peopled with green and scarlet demons torturing lost souls. I have seen the photograph of a painting of the Last Judgment by Hans Memling in St. Mary's Church, Dantzic, very similar in design, which would seem to support the theory of the foreign origin of the Fairford windows. On the other hand, I understand that on the west wall of Chaldon Church, Surrey, there was discovered in 1870 under whitewash a fine mediæval fresco in terra-cotta colouring representing "the ladder of the salvation of the human soul and the road to Heaven." In this wall painting there are the same grim pictorial representations of eternal punishment, and also of the joys of Paradise, that we find in the "Doom window" at Fairford. Whether generations of village folks were influenced by this object-lesson of the wages of sin I know not. Kneeling towards the east, the worshippers were oftener face to face with the tragedy of Calvary as depicted on the chancel window. It is only as they leave the sacred building that they are confronted by the Doom window. To me it seemed as if the lurid details in the lower lights would be overshadowed by the transfigured grandeur of the Most High surrounded by cherubim and seraphim in everlasting adoration. Nor have I noticed any record of what Keble thought of these grim representations. This result, at least, the windows had as a whole. When in 1847–8 Keble was busy adorning his new church at Hursley, he wished the

subjects of the windows to form a connected series from the Fall to the Day of Judgment. He was always " hankering after Fairford," as he himself tells us. Indeed, it was his fond memories of Fairford that inspired him to restore Hursley Church. His biographer, Sir John Coleridge, says that " he was at that time fresh from the noble church at Fairford ; but the feeling grew upon him ; nothing that was appropriate could be, to his mind, too beautiful or rich for God's house."

Here, then, at Fairford we have not merely golden legends of the early Church, told in " brittle crazie glasse," but as George Herbert further puts it in the poem which I quote at the beginning of this paper—

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one,

a subtle combination of the intellectual and sensuous in worship, such as we have in certain forms of church music. To appreciate fully this combination one must visit the French cathedrals, leaving the sun-bathed street flooded with light, for the dim religious gloom that fills the solemn aisles until form seems to vanish and we are enveloped in an atmosphere of colour alone in which the gem-like scintillations of ruby and emerald, and the draperies of saints and kings in purple and gold, all combine to appeal to the emotions. The charm of many a noble window is entirely spoiled by its proximity to a great uncoloured window, and this is especially the case in our English cathedrals. Form is there, clustered capitals, fretted vaults, and carven screens ; but only beneath the emblazoned window of some secluded Lady Chapel does the worshipper find

the soothing atmosphere most in accord with the spirit of meditation.

And so I pass from Fairford Church to the author of *The Christian Year*. John Keble was born at Fairford in 1792, not at the parsonage house, for his father was vicar, not of Fairford, but of Coln St. Aldwyns, three miles distant, and resided on his own property at Fairford until his death at the age of eighty-nine. "Keble House" was pointed out to me, a roomy country house, clad with ivy and white clematis, and sheltered by its beeches and chestnuts. His friend Newman had pleasant memories of Fairford, of its garden and tree-surrounded paddock, and of that happy family cricle. "Keble's verses," wrote Newman, "are written (as it were) in all their faces." It was doubtless of his father's garden that he wrote :—

> The shower of moonlight falls as still and clear
> Upon the desert main,
> As where sweet flowers some pastoral garden cheer
> With fragrance after rain.

For years Keble acted as his father's curate. When offered the living of Hursley in 1829 he declined, because he could not leave his aged parent. It was not until the offer came a second time in 1835, after his father's death and when to him the calls of a sacred duty were now satisfied, that he left Fairford for Hursley. Hence it is that *The Christian Year*, composed in the earlier Fairford days, and published in 1827, seems to contain so many vignette pictures of lovely Cotswold scenery. Behind Fairford Church flows the gentle Coln, said to be the finest trouting stream in the midlands and west of England. It flows

for some fifteen miles or so past old-fashioned villages and Elizabethan manor-houses until it joins the Thames near Lechlade. Keble was familiar with its quiet waters as he walked to and from Fairford to Coln St. Aldwyns, and, like the fragrance of his own " pastoral fields," these quiet waters found their way into his poems. Was it up in the wolds that he heard

> The wheeling kite's wild solitary cry ?

As expressive of his feeling for " lone Nature," what can be finer than his verses for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity, beginning :—

> Where is Thy favoured haunt, eternal voice ?

Coleridge tells us that the passage in this poem,

> The fitful sweep
> Of winds across the steep,
> Through withered bents, romantic note and clear
> Meet for a hermit's ear,

would seem to have been suggested to Keble as he lay on the lee side of the Malvern Hills on a summer evening in 1822, reading Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*. " What a delightful feel it is," writes Keble, " to sit under the shelter of one of the rocks here, and hear the wind sweeping with that peculiar kind of moaning sign which it practises on the bent grass,"—" the bents sae brown " of our Scottish ballads. It is a curious coincidence that in Keble's splendid tribute to Sir Walter Scott in a review of Lockhart's *Life* he incidentally quotes a passage from Robert Burns, in which the poet expresses his delight in walking " in the sheltered side of the wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy

winter day," and hearing " the stormy wind howling among the trees over the plains. It is my best season for devotion."

Apart, therefore, from the point of view of *The Christian Year* as a religious classic, this little volume of verse places Keble among the poets of Nature. Keble instils into his pages the creed of Wordsworth. He, too, has seen meadow, grove, and stream " apparelled in celestial light " and felt that presence " whose dwelling is the light of setting suns." Spring and autumn were his favourite seasons. Summer was sad, because the time of the singing of the birds had ceased and the brooklets were dry ; but autumn brought back to Nature the robin's cheery note. Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun on a brief November day, and later still the snowdrops, " first-born of the year's delight," twinkle to the wintry moon. One could go on quoting from, or paraphrasing, such passages ; word-pictures abound in every poem.

But Keble was more than a mere dilettante or painted-window saint. He lived and worked for nearly forty years after the publication of *The Christian Year*. The founders of the Oxford Movement were men of action as well as of contemplation. Keble's very first poem in that collection advocates the nobility of work, however humble.

> The trivial round, the common task
> Would furnish all we ought to ask.

Both Newman and Sir John Coleridge bore testimony to the infinite labour, learning, and research involved, for example, in Keble's edition of Hooker, and to the

beauty of his Latin *Lectures on Poetry*. Dean Stanley, after a lapse of thirty years, had not forgotten his helpfulness and quiet kindness of manner; and when, in 1875, Dr. Pusey asked Dr. Newman (he was not yet a Cardinal) to write something by way of preface to Keble's collected *Occasional Papers and Reviews*, he replied, "How can I profess to paint a man who will not sit for his picture?" The question conveyed so much to those who knew Keble's retiring disposition; and yet Newman draws a portrait of his friend, full of tenderness and beauty, recalling his unworldly spirit, his delicacy of mind, his tenderness for others, his playfulness, the portrait of one, in short, whom to know was to love.

XV

IN THE COTSWOLD COUNTRY

The Christian Year was in the hands of every one, even the youngest undergraduate. Besides its more intrinsic qualities, the tone of it blended well with the sentiment which the venerable aspect of the old city awakened. It used to be pleasing to try and identify amid the scenery around Oxford some of the spots from which were drawn those descriptions of nature with which the poems are inlaid.

Shairp's "Studies in Poetry and Philosophy."

IN THE COTSWOLD COUNTRY

ONCE again the bells of Magdalen and Merton mingle with my waking thoughts, and across the meadows, beyond the two Hinkseys, the Cumnor hills bound the horizon. The spell of Oxford had again drawn me to its grey-worn towers, to thread "the stream-like windings" of its glorious street. Last night a dim light glimmered in the University Church of St. Mary's, and I passed under its famous Laudian porch and into the nave, with its historic pews. In the north chapel, or vestry, a zealous organist was instilling into the ears of some youthful choristers the beauty of English Church music, and in response their soft, fluty voices gradually filled the columned aisles. Beyond the glass doors of the stone screen the moonlight fell through the south unstained windows in chastened radiance on the floor of the empty choir. Here in the nave is the pulpit from which John Keble preached his famous sermon on the 14th of July, 1833, the day which Newman ever kept as the start of the great Oxford Movement. Ten years later Newman himself left St. Mary's, and afterwards gave to the world his impassioned record written in tears. You cannot forget the chiselled profile of his saintly face as he looks at you from the printsellers' windows in Oxford. It was another Cardinal, his friend Manning,

who recalled at the time of Newman's death those days at St. Mary's :—

" When I was twenty years of age, and he (Newman) was about twenty-eight, I remember his form and voice and penetrating words at evensong in the University Church at Oxford. Having once seen and heard him, I never willingly failed to be there. As time went on, those quiet days passed into the conflict and tumult of the following years,"—

quiet days which Newman never forgot. Even the snapdragon growing on the walls of Trinity opposite his freshman's rooms at one time seemed to him " the emblem of my own perpetual residence even unto death in my University."

A kinder fate left to the Church of England and to Oxford the rich inheritance of John Keble, and now a great college is dedicated to his memory. Years before his name was marked out as to be for ever associated with Oxford, Keble writes to a friend :—

" Every time I go there I feel like a miser looking over his old chests, and thinking how much money he has wasted in his youth ; the last time I was there, in particular, I had the temptation very strong upon me to stay and plunge myself into the walks, libraries, and cathedral services for a year ; but conscience prevailed, and I came back to the Cotswolds."

The remembrance of such associations flitted across my memory as I listened, amid the evening shadows, to the music of that choir invisible, and watched the moonlight flicker across the tomb of Amy Robsart. Surely the spirit of Oxford dwells here, of old mediæval, conservative Oxford, dwells, too, in the time-worn

college quads where Keble noted how the " embattled line of shadows hid the moon's white glimmerings." But I, too, must break the spell, for one of my reasons for returning to this " seat of calm delight," as Keble calls it, was to enable me to revisit once more Fairford Church and follow the poet's footsteps into his own Cotswold country. Last year when I visited Fairford the chestnuts were in full bloom ; to-day, in mid-April, they are only beginning to unfold their leaves, and here and there the blackthorn sprays brighten the hedgerows. Even amid the cold weather of April Keble House had an air of warmth about it, amid the elms, beeches, and chestnuts that sheltered its pastoral garden and orchard.

After the detailed account of Fairford Church in the preceding paper, I need only refer generally to the impressions of a second visit to its famous windows. They are like the open pages of a great illuminated missal, of absorbing interest to the antiquary, the ecclesiologist, the painter, and the architect of to-day, as well as to the generations of priests, pastors, and people for whose instruction in righteousness, down through five centuries, they have enriched this House of God. One might spend days in their examination, discovering new beauties in these jewelled commentaries in ruby and emerald. Thus the saints and early fathers, with scrolls over their heads, are gorgeously enrobed in draperies of salmon-pink or in deep purple velvet, forgetful of the camel's hair of the earlier St. John or the fisher garb of the saints of Galilee. The golden drapery of the Queen of Sheba, wearing a crown of paler gold on her head, and bearing a silver

casket tipped with gold, forms a strikingly effective colour-scheme as worked out by these poet-painters of the fifteenth century. How exquisite is the crisp frosted silver! Here in another window is a fair, golden-haired saint, St. Anne, I think, the mother of St. Mary, carrying a pair of doves in a golden cage. The artist who painted that beautiful face must have had the soul of Francis of Assisi. The Blessed Virgin, in contrast, is draped in a blue gown. The west window of the south aisle contains another memorial of a saint with a beautiful name, Veronica, whose handkerchief is said still to be preserved at St. Peter's. The poet Gray records, by the way, how he saw this relic at Rome on the Good Friday of 1740; but in this ancient window even the dim, faded representation of the handkerchief, with the still dimmer, miraculous impression of our Saviour's face, seems of such stuff as dreams are made, or like the fairy gossamer that clothes the gorse on an autumnal morning.

Time passes, however, and I must be on my way. Not Fairford, but Coln St. Aldwyns was the goal of this April pilgrimage—Coln, the Cotswold village of which Keble's father was vicar for fifty-three years and Keble himself the curate for ten years. The gates of Fairford Park stood invitingly open, and although the vicar and the postman, the kindly village representatives of Church and State, both assured me that there was no road through the park under the present proprietorship, the temptation to trespass was too strong. After all,

> What have we to do
> With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?

I felt sure that honest John Tame would not grudge me a walk through his policies. With such soothing casuistries, or sophistries, if you will, I soon found a path that led to the gentle river Coln, through the gardens of Fairford Manor, a path by quiet waters and lush meadows, dotted here and there with elms and beeches, until I reached a cascade where the river was cut in two by an islet connected with the two sides of the stream by wooden bridges. It would have been a delightful place in which to linger if April in England had been the ideal April of our dreams. Above the cascade the meadows, though fair to see, were swampy, and as I wasn't a dry-fly fisher with a passport from " The Bull," I took my course up the hill towards an obelisk. What the pillar commemorated I do not know, for a thrifty landlord or farmer had encircled it with a crop of winter wheat. From this height there is a fine view of the Coln winding its serpentine way through the meadows, fringed as usual with osiers, beyond which there is a picturesque vista of the village of Quenington. A basket hedge of twisted osiers separated the spinney from the ploughed field, and here I heard the cuckoo for the first time this year (22nd April), always a notable event to the lover of Nature. Five days earlier—namely, on the 17th of April—I noticed the swallow at the Moat Farm, between Pinner and Harrow, skimming over the duck-pond. Alas ! that one swallow did not make a summer. Burns's thrush on the leafless bough, singing a song on the poet's birthday on the 25th of January, 1793, is a familiar, if plaintive, picture, but when belated winter still reigns in mid-April our

summer migrants are not less deserving of our sympathy.

Returning to the King's highway beyond the obelisk, the road, I found, soon dipped down to the Coln and the village of Quenington. The voice of the cuckoo was everywhere ; only the naked elms and the dull, cloudy sky accentuated the dourness of spring. One might have passed Quenington Church without comment were it not for its two magnificent Norman doorways, carefully preserved from the weather by deep wooden porches. They are said to have been built under the direction of the monks of Gloucester. Framed in their rich deep chevron and beak-head mouldings, somewhat similar to the west doorway at Iffley, the sculptured work in the tympanum of the north door represents the triumph of Christ over Satan and Death, and that of the south door the coronation of the Blessed Virgin. Beyond the church, the gatehouse of a Preceptory of the Knights of St. John is all that is left to remind the pilgrim of the ancient Hospitallers of Quenington. Very picturesque is the great Gothic gateway, the small postern door, and the high-pitched roof of the old gatehouse, which now forms an approach to Quenington Court. Here, and in the neighbouring villages, one began to note the characteristic features of Cotswold architecture, windows of leaded panes framed in stone mullions, high-pitched gables, and tall chimneys. A small limestone quarry by the wayside showed that originally these houses would be creamy white in colour, but centuries had toned them down to grey. " There is no other district in England," says the author of *Old English*

Country Cottages, " that has expressed so simply and so beautifully in terms of building the unity between the soil, the dwelling, and its inhabitants."

A trout splashed in the stream as I crossed the mill-race to follow the steep ascent to the Church of Coln St. Aldwyns. This church has the familiar square tower with corner finials and open battlement. It has also a deeply recessed Norman doorway ; but although the church is comely, there is nothing otherwise special to note from the point of view of the archæologist. A simple pointed arch separates the choir from the transepts and nave, and the east window, deeply splayed, consists of two small lancet-shaped lights. The lover of formal gardens, however, will rejoice in the great old yews, the clipped box and trim junipers, kept in perfect order. Just over the boundary wall there is a delightful glimpse of an old Elizabethan manor-house, with stone mullioned and transomed windows and twisted chimneys. For years it has done duty as a " manor-farm," until recently restored into a manor-house by Lord St. Aldwyn, better known as Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. Only those who have travelled in the remoter parts of England can appreciate the atmosphere of romance that lingers around a manor-farm. As at Coln St. Aldwyns, it is often adjoining the church, and you fancy that it must be the vicarage. Meanwhile in course of time lands have been joined to lands, acres to acres, and the old Elizabethan manor-house proving too small has been displaced by the great Renaissance mansion-house, built perhaps by some ex-Lord Mayor of London, a citizen of credit and renown, the successor to the ancient squire, who

lost all by siding with King Charles against the Parliament.

But I must call a halt, for I can see that this train of thought might lead far from the subject on hand. This, then, is Coln St. Aldwyns, noted for its trouting stream more perhaps than for its association with the Kebles. On my return walk to Fairford I passed Hathrop Castle, another restored and enlarged Elizabethan manor-house, and the road to East Leach, one of Keble's cures, where across the river a footbridge leading to the church is still known as Keble's Bridge. The undertaking the care of these curacies, we learn from Sir J. T. Coleridge, was indeed a labour of love ; " the whole receipts exceeded very little £100 a year, and I have no doubt fell short considerably of what was expended on them." What he thought during these long walks from Fairford to Coln he tells in a letter written in 1816. " The hours which I spend alone, owing to the distance of my cure from home, are many, and I have indulged myself in a sad trick of filling them up with melancholy presages." 'Twas then that he would turn his pastoral melancholy into verse, as he does in his poem for the Third Sunday after Easter, in which he upbraids himself for being sad while he roves along the violet bank :—

> Shame on the heart that dreams of blessings gone,
> Or wakes the spectral forms of woe and crime,
> When Nature sings of joy and hope alone,
> Reading her cheerful lesson in her own sweet time.

Keble has added for all time an additional charm to those outlying Cotswold villages in thus associating them with *The Christian Year*. Naturally I turned to

the poems that coincided with the date of my visit—namely, that selected for the Second Sunday after Easter. Here he incidentally refers to " willow-shaded streams," and of a gentle star whose soothing lustre streams

Around our home's green walls, and on our churchway path.

In the couplet :—

No sun or star so bright
In all the world of light

Keble seems unconsciously to quote Vaughan, just as in the next poem, from which I have already quoted, he re-echoes good Jeremy Taylor. April had special charms for Keble ; he refers to it again and again. The Sundays after Easter breathe of spring, as some of the earlier Sundays after Trinity suggest the promise of richer days in store, when " in the mazes of the budding wood " he notes :—

Where the fresh green earth is strewed
With the first flowers that lead the vernal dance ;

and he hears at dewy eve :—

In the low chant of wakeful birds,
In the deep weltering flood,
In whispering leaves, these solemn words—
" God made us all for good."

Like the exiled Duke, " exempt from public haunt " amid the forest glades of Arden, he finds " good in everything." Yet Coleridge tells us that Keble seldom spoke of *The Christian Year* without something of sadness and dissatisfaction. The poems unavoidably painted Keble's own heart, but with his innate modesty

he felt that the picture was not a true likeness. He did not wish to be thought better than he was, to be deemed a saint because he had painted one, and thus the good opinion of the world was to him a cause of real sorrow.

If in these later paragraphs the note that Keble has inspired is pitched somewhat in a minor key, as if someone were singing a song of willow by Keble's osier stream, the memory of the day's pilgrimage is certainly not so, for it was one long joy. The beauty of Anglican Church music, the glorious colours of the painted windows, "the tender greening of April meadows," were, as Brother Jasper might have said, all sweet things. Yet I must confess that late in the afternoon I was not sorry to find that Coln St. Aldwyns contained a hostelry which would have pleased Dr. Johnson or Shenstone, and that mine excellent host, in addition to his primary duties as innkeeper, administered in a fine, sympathetic spirit some of the smaller offices of State, generally held by the village schoolmaster.

When I reached Fairford the bells were ringing for evensong. I had little time to spare; but I was anxious to see the windows in the grey light, for it was too late to watch

> The sunbeams steal
> Through painted glass at evensong.

The vicar, the clerk, and six of a congregation reminded me of what Keble had to say about Mr. Herbert's saint's bell ringing to prayers, for he argued that "it is a great mistake to measure the effect of daily service altogether by the number of attendants

on it." In the fading light I noted how the rich draperies that were aglow with colour in the morning but emphasised the shadows of evening. It was the silver tones that told—even in the gloaming they had not lost their fascination. At " The Bull " the coach was ready to start for the station. Two undergraduates of Christ Church " up " for the summer term were my only fellow-passengers. They, too, had spent the day by the Coln, or rather several days, and were eager to discuss the relative merits of wet and dry fly-fishing. Their talk was of rivers in Wales and lochs in Sutherland. We talked, too, of books and studies, for who does not at Oxford ? And when we came within sight of the Cumnor hills that locate the ramblings of *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar-Gipsy*, I felt that I was once more under the spell of the grand old University town, " the sacred genius of this place," as John Dryden calls it, that made Oxford to him a dearer name than his own mother University.

XVI

A VISIT TO COWPER'S BIRTHPLACE

A poet fond of Nature, and your friend.

Cowper's "Retirement."

XVI

A VISIT TO COWPER'S BIRTHPLACE

NO one could have described William Cowper more truly than he describes himself in that single line from his poem *Retirement*. Indeed, I cannot recall at the moment the name of another poet for whom I have the same affection. Cowper was pre-eminently the poet of Nature in a more or less conventional age, and it is the charm of his letters that, having once dipped into them, he is "your friend" for ever after. I am not forgetting Gray and Shenstone, his contemporaries. These also I number among my friends. All three had something in common, a certain loneliness about them. Their sensitive natures felt the blows and buffetings of a world that somehow did not go well with them. "Chill penury (of a kind) repressed their noble rage." Memories of Gray and Shenstone are recorded in earlier chapters of this volume, but this paper and those that follow are dedicated to William Cowper, who holds the warmest place in my affections. There was the shadow over Cowper's life, "Melancholy mark'd him for her own," and as we read his letters or note the personal touches in his poems, our hearts go out to him as they only do to our nearest and dearest in times of affliction.

It was this personal note that was uppermost in my mind on a bright autumnal morning as I left the old Bucks farmhouse for a raid across the borders into Hertfordshire to the pleasant country town of Great Berkhampstead, the birthplace of Cowper, and let me add here, of Bishop Ken, a still earlier hymnist, the friend and relative of Izaak Walton. Over the borders and away! There were no Cheviots to cross this time, but the Aston and Tring Hills, parts of the Chiltern range, were very good substitutes. The long white chalky road climbing the hill, and the green hedges, still white with trailing clusters of "traveller's joy," are so characteristically English. To quote Cowper's own lines :—

> The sloping land recedes into the clouds,
> Displaying on its varied side the grace
> Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,
> Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
> Just undulates upon the list'ning ear.

In this particular district the spire is not so common; the square embattled tower is everywhere. Thus in another passage, describing the effect of the soft music of village bells, Cowper writes :—

> And through the trees I view th' embattled tower
> Whence all the music.

From the top of one of these embattled towers I caught my first distant glimpse of Berkhampstead Church. Beneath, lay the quaint old houses of North-church, in the middle distance gleamed the Grand Junction Canal, with its locks and barges, and beyond these the square tower of Great Berkhampstead just peeped above the distant trees.

The whole scene was reminiscent of the type of English landscape that we associate with the masterpieces of Constable. To linger over a book on the hot leaden roof of such a tower as that of Northchurch on a summer's day "were Paradise enow." But this fine old church was not my objective, and so somewhat reluctantly I descended the belfry stairs into the transept, and from thence out on to the open road once more. Northchurch village, however, is but an extension of Great Berkhampstead. It was not long, therefore, before I reached the centre of the fine old market town, and pulled up under the shadow of the great church of which the poet's father, John Cowper, D.D., Chaplain to George II, was rector from 1722 to 1756. The exterior of the church presents a large Gothic structure built of flints, with choir, transepts, north and south aisles, nave with clerestories, and central battlemented square tower. The windows in general are Perpendicular in style; others, again, are Flamboyant. The antiquarian will doubtless recognise remains of still earlier work in stone and brick on the west wall of the north transept; while the lover of Nature will rest his eyes on the glorious mantle of crimson virginia creeper that clothes its walls to the south and west. The interior is very imposing. The transepts and choir are shut off from the nave by a handsome dark oak rood-screen of Perpendicular work, and as you enter by the western doorway the great cross surmounting the screen stands out in strong relief against the dimly lit chancel beyond, with its east window of three lights filled in with painted glass, and dedicated to the poet himself. The church

contains the usual features that we associate with an ancient shrine south of the Tweed—old brasses, mural tablets, recumbent effigies, heraldic hatchments, and, alas! there is also the only too frequent memorial in our parish churches in memory of those who fell in the war in South Africa, 1899–1902.

I have no great affection for dates, but they are as essential to the student of history and literature as a knowledge of anatomy is to the painter. It might be well, therefore, to remind my readers in a sentence of the places and dates connected with Cowper's movements, so that the sense of proportion and perspective may not be overlooked. The poet was born in 1731 at "the Pastoral House," Great Berkhampstead, in Hertfordshire. His schoolboy days date from 1741 to 1749 at Westminster, although it was not until 1756, on the death of his father, as we shall see, that he sighed a long adieu to the fields and woods to which he was to return no more. The period of his residence in London as distinguished from his schoolboy days extended from 1750 to 1763. Then followed (1) the memorable years at St. Albans, 1763–65; (2) the two years' residence at Huntingdon, from June, 1765, to October, 1767; (3) the nine years at Olney, October, 1767, to November, 1786; (4) the Weston Underwood period, which extended to July, 1795; and (5) the last sad stage in Norfolk, from 1795 to his death on the 25th of April, 1800. Cowper himself says in one of his letters: "My many changes of habitation have divided my time into many short periods, and when I look back upon them they appear

only as the stages in a day's journey, the first of which is at no very great distance from the last."

The poet himself, as everyone knows, was laid to rest in Dereham Church, in Norfolk, but there was one mural tablet that I looked for and found on the south side of the chancel, the monument to the memory of Ann Cowper, the poet's mother. The tribute to her memory begins with these lines :—

> Consigned to earth lies (young) bereft of life
> The best of mothers and the kindest wife ;
> Who neither knew nor practised any art,
> Secure in all she wished, her husband's heart.

" The best of mothers ! " William was only six years old when she died, and yet what memories he cherished of her goodness. Years after (he was then fifty-nine) he received the gift of his mother's picture from a cousin in Norfolk, and it was on receipt of her portrait that he wrote the most touchingly exquisite of all his poems :—

> O that those lips had language ! Life has pass'd
> With me but roughly since I heard thee last.

Rough indeed for that poor " stricken deer that left the herd long since."

I recollect *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, dear old Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes (who always somehow reminds me of Dr. John Brown), remarking that it was not the great historical events, but the personal incidents that, after all, appealed to us most. " Something intensely human, narrow, and definite," he writes, " pierces to the seat of our sensibilities more

readily than huge occurrences and catastrophes. A nail will pick a lock that defies hatchet and hammer. The *Royal George* went down with all her crew, and Cowper wrote an exquisitely simple poem about it ; but the leaf which holds it is smooth, while that which bears the lines on his mother's portrait is blistered with tears."

As he tells us in that memorable poem, Cowper's memory takes him back more than half a century to that day when he heard the tolling bell, and saw from his nursery window the hearse that bore her away from him for ever.

> Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
> Children not thine have trod my nursery floor ;
> And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
> Drew me to school along the public way,
> Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapp'd
> In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capp'd,
> 'Tis now become a history little known
> That once we call'd the past'ral house our own.

Whether you call it pastoral house, rectory, or manse, there is always that touch of pathos. There are those who have left the manse for conscience' sake ; but we must not forget that there more frequently comes a time when the widow and the fatherless must leave the home, of a lifetime, it may be, to make way for the new incumbent. It was on the death of his father in 1756, when the poet was a young man of five-and-twenty, that this fact struck him with all its force. Some thirty years later he recorded his impressions on leaving Berkhampstead. The passage occurs

in a letter dated 1787, addressed to his friend Samuel Rose :—

"When my father died I was young, too young to have reflected much. He was rector of Berkhampstead, and there I was born. It had never occurred to me that a parson has no fee-simple in the house and glebe he occupies. There was neither tree, nor gate, nor stile in all that country to which I did not feel a relation, and the house itself I preferred to a palace. I was sent for from London to attend him in his last illness, and he died just before I arrived. Then, and not till then, I felt for the first time that I and my native place were disunited for ever. I sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which I once thought I should never be parted, and was at no time so sensible of their beauties, as just when I left them all behind me, to return no more."

Tennyson, too, in *In Memoriam* has given expression to the same vain fond regrets on leaving his father's rectory at Somersby :—

> We leave the well-beloved place
> Where first we gazed upon the sky ;
> The roofs, that heard our earliest cry,
> Will shelter one of stranger race.

Henceforth the great church of Berkhampstead became to Cowper as a dream. Huntingdon, Olney, Dereham, each in turn sheltered the poet, and still cherish his memory. It is not necessary, however, to visit these shrines in order to keep in touch with Cowper, to breathe the atmosphere of his poems. Throughout the length and breadth of the land there are few Sundays on which his gentle muse doth not

contribute to the service of praise ; and, when to Dr. Dykes's tune, " St. Bees," the old and familiar hymn, " Hark, my soul ! it is the Lord," echoes through the aisles, it is pleasing to remember that the inspired verses were the outpourings of " England's sweetest and most pious bard."

XVII

"LIKE UNTO THEM THAT DREAM"

A PILGRIMAGE FROM HUNTINGDON TO ST. IVES

Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in his bank,
Stand, never o'erlooked, our favourite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote.

Cowper's "Task."

XVII

"LIKE UNTO THEM THAT DREAM"

A PILGRIMAGE FROM HUNTINGDON TO ST. IVES

"THE thoughts of youth are long, long, thoughts," wrote the New England poet Longfellow, and so they seemed to me as I stood on the site of the castle of Huntingdon, for there was something that seemed to suggest a previous knowledge of a locality visited for the first time. The Castle Hill, as it is called, is a gentle grassy eminence crowned with a circle of Scots firs. It commands the town and bridge of Huntingdon and a long stretch of level country, characteristic of the English Midlands, through which the Great Ouse threads its silver course to Ely and the North Sea. Was it merely its sweet-sounding name, I wondered, that seemed so familiar, and then I recollected that the link that bound this quiet English landscape with the days of boyhood was to be found within the pages of Sir Walter Scott's *Talisman*. It was on such a mount as this, albeit amid the deserts of Syria, that a Scottish prince, David, Earl of Huntingdon, under the assumed name of Sir Kenneth of Scotland, a simple Crusader knight, was deputed to guard the banner of England in the face of all comers. Who will ever forget that terrible moment when,

lured from the post of honour to make sport for princesses, he returned to St. George's Mount to find that the standard of England had disappeared, that the spear on which it had floated lay broken on the ground, and that the Prince of Scotland's faithful staghound Roswal was writhing, apparently in the agonies of death ? Had this brave Crusader lived some centuries later he might have been tempted to apply the words of Richard Lovelace :—

> I could not love thee (Deare) so much
> Lov'd I not Honour more.

But then there would have been no stirring sequel, and Sir Walter knew better ; he himself possessed the talisman that made him what he was. Into the romance of *The Talisman* Sir Walter weaved the story of that David, Earl of Huntingdon, heir-presumptive to William the Lion ; but the first Scottish Earl of Huntingdon was David, youngest son of Malcolm Canmore, who had passed his youth at the English Court, and who at the age of twenty-nine married the widow of the Earl of Northampton, and by his marriage received the honour of Huntingdon, thereby becoming an English Earl. This excellent prince is afterwards known in history as David I, the great patron of the Church. Thus it was that these two mounts were linked together, the mount of history and the mount of romance.

The Castle has long since vanished, but beneath its slopes the Great Ouse still glides under its grand old bridge, with its picturesque moulded Gothic cornice, and away to the right, amid a dream of willow saughs

and poplars, rises the spire of St. Mary's, Godmanchester, while about two miles down the river, beyond the green meadows, the square tower of Hartford Church stands out in relief, bathed in sunshine. The old town of Huntingdon, on the Great North Road, has many memories. I do not forget, for example, that it is associated with Cromwell and Pepys, but this is a continuation of my Cowper pilgrimages, and to me the poet is still the *genius loci*. The spire of St. Mary's, Godmanchester, is a replica of Olney spire ; the square tower of Hartford indicates the direction of Cowper's favourite walk ; and the Great Ouse flows past Olney and Huntingdon alike.

To Godmanchester I first bent my steps, about half a mile to the south of the old bridge on the Great North Road. This ancient borough consists of a double row of old Georgian dwellings. The church, carefully restored by Sir Gilbert Scott, is one of those haunts of ancient peace that are the glory of England. There are many more beautiful, but St. Mary's has its own interesting features. The old fifteenth-century stalls in the choir with their miserere seats or misericordes, grotesquely carved underneath, still remain. Even the pews are carved. The handsome screen and the reredos, representing our Lord's Crucifixion, are modern. Retracing my steps, I crossed the bridge. Passing on my right " the mother-church of Huntingdon," with its Cromwellian associations, I reached Cowper's house, a plain brick eighteenth-century structure. You have passed hundreds of such houses in old market towns ; but through his letters Cowper preserved for us the record of his life in Huntingdon,

as elsewhere, and so this unpretentious dwelling, guiltless of anything to show its connection with the poet, takes its place among the literary shrines of England.

These two years at Huntingdon were among the happiest in the poet's life. He appreciated the quiet of his "beloved retirement," and told Lady Hesketh that if he had the choice of all England he could not have chosen better. But even a poet must come down to earth sometimes and deal with things mundane. It is amusing to listen to his early experiences in housekeeping before the Unwins took him in hand. "A man," he writes, "cannot always live upon sheep's heads and liver and lights, like the lions in the Tower," and consequently he launches out in reckless fashion, ordering joints, legs of lamb, beef for pies, that seem "endless encumbrances," even though his landlord and the washerwoman are admitted to share them. "Then, as to small beer, I am puzzled to pieces about it. I have bought as much for a shilling as will serve at least a month, and it is grown sour already." It is in such passages as these that we see the delightful character of the man. He enjoys so heartily the recording of his own failures in what was certainly to him a new branch of study, as if it were a bit of high comedy, and adds in the same vein: "In short, I never knew how to pity poor housekeepers before; but now I cease to wonder at that politic cast which their occupation usually gives to their countenance, for it is really a matter full of perplexity." About this time, too, an extremely civil woollen draper cultivated Cowper's acquaintance. It wasn't John Gilpin. He was a linen draper, "as all the world doth know."

This neighbour was the proud possessor of a bath, and promised Cowper the key of it, which he hoped to make use of in winter. Meantime, being midsummer, he had his morning dip in the Ouse—"a noble stream to bathe in," he says, and after his bath he seemed ready for anything. Thus he begins a letter, under date July 4th, 1765: "Being just emerged from the Ouse, I sit down to thank you, my dear cousin, for your friendly and comfortable letter." There was also his friend the poor curate, a north-country divine, "who reads prayers here twice a day, all the year round, and travels on foot to serve two churches every Sunday through the year, his journey out and home being sixteen miles." When Cowper supped with him he was entertained in true English fashion to bread and cheese and a black jug of ale of the curate's own brewing. What better could he wish than a bumper of the historic Huntingdon ale? This curate afterwards became Vicar of Leighton Bromswold, in the same county, the parish church of which George Herbert restored, after twenty years' neglect, at his own charges, on his appointment to the cure. Those who know Herbert's *Country Parson*, and especially his description of "the Parson's Church," will understand how he abhorred the slovenliness which now and again crept into the service of the church. During the Cromwellian period it was worse than slovenliness, and after the brilliant Caroline period the indifference of the eighteenth century to such matters called forth even from Cowper, who was regarded as a bit of a Methodist, a vigorous protest against the ruinous condition of parish churches. He did not see, for example,

why owls, bats, and magpies should contribute the principal part of the church music in many of these ancient edifices, and yet this was the age of Handel!

It is not easy to break the spell that causes one to linger around Huntingdon, thinking of Cowper and wandering about its old churches. But the day wears on, and if I must leave this old-fashioned town, at least the Great Ouse will be my companion as far as St. Ives, as it had already been from Olney to Bedford. Leaving Cowper House, I turned down Three Tun Lane on my way to the village of Hartford, whose church, Cowper tells Lady Hesketh, "is very prettily situated upon a rising ground, so close to the river that it washes the wall of the churchyard." The landscape differs little from that of my previous pilgrimage. Once again the stream is fringed with pollarded willows, and the skyline of the distant woods is broken by rows of tall Lombardy poplars with their eighteenth-century atmosphere. In a meadow by the river I chatted with a group of anglers who were fishing for bream. Some were using small bleak and some gudgeon as ground bait, just as honest Izaak had recommended 250 years ago. One kindly brother of the angle offered me his whole catch when he learned how far I had travelled to visit his beloved Ouse, and on inquiring as to "the footpath way" another bade me "be sure and go by 'The Thicket' after you pass Wyton." It seemed as if I had stepped backwards two centuries at least, into "A land where all things always seemed the same."

When I reached the tiny village of Hartford, Cowper's Hartford (not to be confused with the

county town of Hertfordshire), I was impressed with the purity of the river Ouse as I rested in the ferry-boat beneath the walls of the old church and looked back across the meadows to the distant spire of St. Mary's, Godmanchester. Very pleasant it was to reach this sweet resting-place. Sometimes a sound of laughing voices rippled down the stream as some Huntingdon folks rowed past, and then there was silence. 'Tis a tiny church that of Hartford, with a tiny chancel and miniature north and south aisles. The church is partly Norman, and behind the altar is a modern Norman reredos in keeping with the heavy chevron mouldings of the chancel arch. Silent as the grave was this haunt of Cowper save for the quick ticking of the clock in the square church tower, and as I rested I had leisure to read the mural inscriptions, such as, "This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven." Over one of the doorways I noted, too, the impressive injunction, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him."

Presently a parson entered. I felt that both the silence and the spell were broken. We talked of his church and its associations. I gathered that he did not belong to the school of Dean Stanley or Dean Henson. He was strong in the exclusiveness of his beloved Church, the great *ecclesia anglicana*. Suddenly our conversation was interrupted in order that he might ring the bell for evensong, for it was the canonical hour of four, and I learned from him that he read prayers in the church twice daily. Few or none came to these services. Indeed, I saw no one in this out-of-the-world

spot that could have been present. Sometimes, he said, the school children came. I thought of Cowper's friend the curate to whom I have already referred, and of his saintly predecessor, George Herbert, at the sound of whose saint's bell ringing to prayers the ploughman would rest for a moment. 'Twas a short service on week days, the vicar assured me, as I took a furtive glance at my watch and mentally calculated how far I was from St. Ives. No one responded to the call to prayer; the vicar retired for a moment to don his surplice, and in another he had begun "the sentences." Very impressive was that simple service as we two read from the time-hallowed liturgy of the Church of England the verses and responses. It was the 27th day of the month, and almost before I could follow him he was reciting the first verse of the 126th Psalm :—

> When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion: then were we like unto them that dream.

Verse by verse we read alternately the remarkable series of short Psalms that include the *Nisi Dominus* and the *De Profundis*. The whole incident now seems like a dream; that solitary surpliced figure at the reading-desk. How often had he stood there alone! The "service" was soon over, for, of course, there was no sermon, and as the order for both morning and evening prayer appropriately concludes with the prayer of St. Chrysostom, since it refers to the Divine promise where two or three are gathered together, I felt that such a prayer must be a daily consolation to the good man. I saw him no more. Mechanically I re-

sumed my pilgrim's way, "like unto them that dream."

"Like unto them that dream," for later, as the sun was sinking westwards, the magical light of a September afternoon touched tower and stream and tree, and that old Psalm in the old version of the Book of Common Prayer, older than our "authorised" version, for it appeared in the first Prayer Book of 1549, seemed so much in touch with the surroundings. We had read of the "rivers in the south," and there, one of the most famous of the rivers in the south was lapping the very walls of the sanctuary. "He that now goeth forth on his way . . . shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." Some day you may return with joy, glad to revisit these quiet scenes, those old paths; but the sheaves, man, the sheaves, what of them? I have just passed an old-world thatched-roofed village. One of the houses bears the date 1648, the year before they executed King Charles I. Here are two more village churches—Houghton and Wyton. It is too late to visit them now, and I must not forget my angler friend's parting advice, to "be sure and go by 'The Thicket' after you pass Wyton."

If I thought that the Castlemount at Huntingdon seemed familiar, "The Thicket" was still more so in a less psychological sense; for, while it proved to be a short cut to St. Ives through woodlands, it and the surrounding neighbourhood are a famous haunt of English artists. A distinguished Scottish landscape painter once described English art to me as being only fit for chocolate boxes. He might think so if he chose,

and there is namby-pamby art in England as elsewhere —it depends on the man, not the subject—but on the way to St. Ives I saw "chocolate box" originals at every turn, landscapes composed of reeds, willows, and poplars, with perhaps an old cottage, an old mill, or church tower thrown in. There was no necessity for "cooking," the compositions were perfect, just as Nature had designed them. The path through "The Thicket" was such a one as Shakespeare loved. It suggested Collins's *Ode to Evening*, with its "hamlets brown and dim-discovered spires." Trees of all kinds, sloes and brambles, lined the way. For the first time I noted that the hawthorns were now tinged with autumn, and the limes, too, always among the earliest to go, were shedding their leaves. To the west the river reflected a sunset glory, and a great Lombardy poplar stood out in grand relief against the rich, deep tones of the western sky as impressive as any minster spire. How that poplar fitted into the composition over and over again during the last mile or two! To the east the tall tower and spire of All Saints, St. Ives, formed a conspicuous object, and I could just make out the famous bridge, with its quaint building, once a chapel, in the centre. All was restful, the cattle in the meadow yonder, the motionless windmill on the horizon: even an occasional splash in the river, or the distant sound of rowlocks, only accentuated the silence, the peace of a late September evening. The parish church of St. Ives was not yet closed when I reached the town, but it, too, was enshrouded in the shadows of its trees, and amid the heraldry of its blazoned windows. In the market-place even Cromwell on his

pedestal, mellowed not so much by time as twilight, looked "guiltless of his country's blood." Thus did evening's "dewy fingers draw the gradual dusky veil" over a landscape that had been one long continuous joy from morn to eve. It is the charm of a September ramble that it closes just at a time when you have had sufficient walking for the day, when you can appreciate the restfulness of eventide, and watch from the bridge, or from the casement window of some old English hostelry, perhaps, the last faint streaks of daylight glimmering down the track of your day's pilgrimage.

XVIII

MEMORIES OF OLNEY

To me Cowper is still the best of our descriptive poets for every-day wear. And what unobtrusive skill he has! How he heightens, for example, your sense of winter-evening seclusion, by the twanging horn of the postman on the bridge! That horn has rung in my ears ever since I first heard it.—*Russell Lowell's "My Study Windows."*

Then came Olney bridge, not into the house, but into the conversation.—*Cowper's Letters.*

XVIII

MEMORIES OF OLNEY

WILLIAM COWPER, in a spirited passage in *The Task*, describes the arrival of the post in Olney on a winter's evening. You hear his twanging horn just as this " herald of a noisy world " crosses the long, low bridge across the Ouse, at the south end of the town. On he comes from Newport Pagnell on the Holyhead coach road, " boots an' spurs an' a'," with his close-packed load.

> Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
> Is to conduct it to the destined inn ;
> And, having dropp'd th' expected bag, pass on.

To the poet, that bridge had many associations during twenty years of his life. From its parapet how peaceful is the scene that presents itself, with its green, flat, willow-bordered meadows through which the Ouse winds in and out, as it does in the pages of his poems. The sun was glittering on its calm waters as I rested on the bridge, and about a mile and a half to the westward rose the embattled tower of the church of the poet's beloved Weston Underwood, backed by the hanging woods of the Throckmorton estate, the paths through which he himself has so lovingly described. Just beyond the bridge an angler is fishing

for roach and jack amid the willows, and the fine chimes "undulating upon the listening ear" draw attention to the handsome tower and spire of Olney Church. Cowper was fond of the sound of bells, but was never more pleased than when the bells of Olney welcomed his dear cousin Lady Hesketh to the vicarage in June, 1786. Indeed, the only time that Cowper ever wrote anything disparaging concerning bells was once, I believe, when writing to his cousin he complained that he would not be responsible for any blunders in his letter as the smith and carpenter were both in the room hanging a bell. One can appreciate his exception, and, so far from "hanging" the bells, I had experienced on the preceding night at my quarters at "The Bull," of which more anon, that indescribable charm of hearing the midnight chimes from the church tower of an English country town. All is silent but for their rippling music, and mingling with that music is the feeling of strangeness. You are alone in an unfamiliar country, save for what you have read and seen through a poet's eyes. Ah! but what a poet! Is he not the one poet of England who inspires you with the feeling that you have known him since childhood, even as an elder brother? You love him, and as the chimes strike the quarters during those eerie midnight hours you wonder whether you have come too late, and then you recollect that more than a century has come and gone, and that after life's fitful fever he sleeps not here, nor at Weston, but in distant Norfolk. You remember how when that last journey was arranged—it was only to be a temporary absence—Cowper had a presentiment that he would

never return to Weston, and how he wrote on a panel of the window-shutter of his bedroom the couplet :—

> Farewell, dear scenes, for ever closed to me ;
> Oh, for what sorrows must I now exchange ye.

They were rough, unpolished lines, but they proceeded from a bleeding heart. Truly " God moves in a mysterious way."

To return to my lady, long had Cowper wearied for a visit from his cousin. He had mapped out the walks he would take her. " I will shew you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks, everything that I have described," and " the orchard through which, as I am writing here, I shall see you often pass, . . . I already prefer to all the orchards in the world." It was this orchard that gave the name to Cowper's house, Orchardside. It was through this orchard that Cowper passed and repassed in his many visits to the vicarage during Newton's incumbency. Orchardside was presented to the town some years ago by Mr. W. H. Collingridge, a native of Olney, and now forms a museum of Cowper relics. Situated in the market-place, it was not an ideal place in some respects, and in 1773, in one of his seasons of gloom, his *De Profundis*, he sought a retreat in the vicarage in order, says his recent biographer, Mr. Wright, to avoid the noise of the annual fair. Once before, in 1771, Mrs. Unwin and he left Orchardside and stayed for a time at the Bull Inn, on the opposite side of the market-place, while one of their servants, suffering from small-pox, was isolated at home. Newton, however, writing from London, felt very uncomfortable about his friend's residence in an inn " surrounded by noise and

nonsense day and night," adding, " I know His presence can comfort you in the midst of bulls and bears." Newton was evidently not a Shenstone, and did not know how to appreciate, even as the saintly Leighton did, the welcome at an old-world inn. " The Bull " remains notwithstanding, and the literary pilgrim may be safely recommended to sojourn under its hospitable roof. I cannot vouch for the " bears."

Cowper was never fully satisfied with Olney. He often wished that his garden opened into the groves and wildernesses of Weston. To this picturesque village he removed in 1786. Here he remained for ten years, another stage in his chequered journey through life. Space will not permit me in the present paper to describe his favourite walks around Weston ; but as the route of my pilgrimage leads me from Olney eastward to Bedford, and later to Huntingdon, his residence from 1765 to 1767, I shall pass another of the poet's haunts at Lavendon Mill. From the north end of the town the road winds towards the borders of Buckinghamshire, with the Ouse as its companion. The landscape is typical of the Midland counties. Cowper thought that there were worse things than the " contemplation of a turnpike road " ; but on the way to Lavendon there are the wide horizons of a level country to attract the eye, always with distant church towers and poplars on the skyline. About a mile from Olney I looked back on the quiet country town. How beautifully in the middle distance the tower and spire of Olney rose above their guardian poplars. As I lingered, the chimes rang out the four quarters before striking eleven. Tennyson, too, knew

this type of scenery, and the incident reminded me of the passage in *The Gardener's Daughter*, the windy clanging of the minster clock across a league of grass washed by a slow, broad stream. Who has not heard of Rose, the gardener's daughter ? But I must not write of Rose in gentle Cowper's country ; rather must I return to Lady Hesketh, for it was in a letter addressed to her, dated 1st May, 1786, that I first learned of Lavendon. Writing of his walks, as usual, Cowper informs his cousin that :—

"There was, indeed, some time since, in a neighbouring parish called Lavendon, a field, one side of which formed a terrace, and the other was planted with poplars, at whose feet ran the Ouse, that I used to account a little paradise ; but the poplars have been felled, and the scene has suffered so much by the loss that, though still in point of prospect beautiful, it has not charms sufficient to attract me now. A certain poet wrote a copy of verses on this melancholy occasion, which, though they have been printed, I dare say you never saw."

The poet had already written to young Unwin to look out for them in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, but we must read them by Lavendon Mill itself. The verses are entitled *The Poplar Field.*

The poplars are felled, farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade ;
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elasped since I last took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew,
And now in the grass, behold, they are laid,
And the tree is my seat, that once lent me a shade.

The blackbird has fled to another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene, where his melody charm'd me before,
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

I quote only the three descriptive verses. The remaining two contain the moral. His fugitive years were all " hasting " away. He was fifty-five, " on the down-hill side of life." Since Cowper's time poplars have sprung up once more, but the poplar field can never again be Cowper's haunt. Notwithstanding the plaintive minor of the poem, the old mill and the poet's close or field were full of sunshine on the day of my visit. As you approach the mill, its gables just appear above the level of the highway, from which there is a rapid descent to the river. You pass the great barn where Newton sometimes preached, and turning sharply to the right, there, in front of you, is Lavendon Mill, partly brick and partly grey stone, time-worn and lichened. 'Tis a busy corner this, alive with dogs, ducks, geese, hens, and pigeons. As you lean on the wooden bridge that spans the Ouse your eye follows the course of the stream gliding past the tall flag-flowers and chestnuts, as in Tennyson's *The Miller's Daughter*, until it rests on the eyot yonder covered with willows. Such is the scene of *The Poplar Field*. Poplars were growing until recently in the meadow ; they still clothe the high bank, from which you can see Olney spire, altogether an idyllic spot, if only that dog would cease its yelping. Here, too, comes the miller's daughter, not the gardener's daughter of whom I was reminded an hour ago.

It is the miller's daughter,
And she is grown——

Well, I must at least apologise for the disturbance among the poultry. The dog that had resented my intrusion had roused the whole neighbourhood. There was no use trying to soothe him until I had made my peace with the miller's daughter.

O, will she answer if I call ?

After which, perchance, he (the dog) may condescend to wag his tail. I had intended to pass into the Poplar Field as quietly as the Ouse itself, and to read the pensive poem amid its own environment, comparing the fate of the fallen poplars with the " brotherhood of venerable trees " felled by the " degenerate Douglas " at Neidpath Castle. But even a literary pilgrim must relinquish his ideals under the pressure of circumstances, and so I watched the maiden vainly trying to coax some of the ducks ashore, " to take to market," as she explained to me ; but the ducks seemed to divine her purpose, having lost some companions in similar fashion on the previous day. Neither food nor kind words would tempt them to the maiden's feet. On they gabbled as they spluttered down the stream, disturbing even the stately swan at the eyot. No wonder that for the moment the words of a Tennysonian lyric best interpreted the scene. Nor would the courtly Cowper have taken it amiss. Though he himself shrank from the Laureateship at a time when the office was held by poetasters like Pye, Cowper and Tennyson had much in common in their love for quiet English scenery, and in their clear-ringing patriotism jealous of England's glory. Cowper would have restored the lost prestige of the Poets-Laureate

and linked Chaucer and Spenser with Wordsworth and Tennyson. To return to the miller's daughter, it is true that instead of a Tennysonian lyric the poet might have expected from me—

> Perhaps some bonny Caledonian air
> All birks and braes ;

to quote from his *Table Talk*. But no, Sir Cowper, I am on English ground, like the hundred pipers at Carlisle, and so as I leave Lavendon Mill I am still haunted by the refrain—

> It is the miller's daughter,
> And she is grown so dear, so dear.

There ! I knew it would come out. All the more reason to hasten on my way. Bedford town is still a long way off ; so fare thee well, sweet Lavendon Mill !

There are three features of an old-world village that the literary pilgrim cannot easily pass, an old bridge, an old inn, and an old church ; and when these three are so delightfully contiguous as at Turvey, half-way between Olney and Bedford, delay is inevitable. After the episode at Lavendon Mill, the gentle Ouse did not again cross my path until I reached the long, low bridge that connects Buckinghamshire with Bedfordshire. Here a troop of schoolboys were proceeding to the river to fish for chub and roach. Happy boys by their native stream ; when they gravitate to London, as some will do, how they will remember Turvey Bridge ! Above the bridge stood the mill, and in the centre of the mill-pond someone in the olden time had erected the statue of an unhappy-looking classical gentleman, accompanied by what I took to be

a dolphin. The " orra-man," who is always to be found either at the bridge or the inn, told me that " the group " represented Jonah and the whale. Perhaps he was right, for certainly, assuming that the relations and relative proportions of Jonah and the whale were reversed from those recorded in the authorised version of the story, " Jonah " did look as if he were recovering from a severe indigestion. The inn at the Bedford end of the bridge is called " The Three Fishes." As represented on the sign, they were ugly monsters, pikes evidently. The inn itself is an interesting, if decayed, structure, with a porch dated 1624, and a mark on the wall recording the fact that the river had here risen four feet above the roadway on the 26th September, 1797. Poor Cowper by that time had gone into Norfolk, far from his beloved Ouse, for that record flood was but three years before his death. The year 1797 was a notable one for the parishioners of Turvey in another respect, for it was in that year that Legh Richmond was ordained a deacon of the English Church, and eight years later became rector of Turvey. One cannot help thinking that had it been Cowper's lot to have had as his pastor the author of *The Dairyman's Daughter* (that old-fashioned evangelical classic with its vivid description of English scenery), instead of the joint author of the Olney hymns, he would have enjoyed a companionship more akin to his own temperament.

The beautiful church of All Saints at Turvey is rich in altar-tombs, recumbent effigies in alabaster dating from Henry VII, the boast of heraldry and the pomp of power, in memory of the Mordaunt family,

Earls of Peterborough; but there was nothing here to remind me of Cowper, nor will there be anything perhaps until I reach Huntingdon. Among the knick-knacks at the manor-house of Turvey Abbey are preserved, I believe, Cowper's silver shoe-buckles, a link certainly, for do they not recall the bard of Olney in his happier days, spick-and-span, setting out on a visit to the Throckmortons? or penning a poem of thanks to my Lady Hesketh for some dainty present, or a letter to the same sweet cousin on receipt of a tortoise-shell snuff-box with a landscape on the lid and the three hares in the foreground? You think of that little group at Orchardside as Alfred Austin has described them in a sentence, Cowper pacing the red-walled garden paths composing *The Task*, Mrs. Unwin coming out of the Georgian hall to bring a comforter if the air was chill, and, in the evening, Lady Austen playing on the harpsichord a serene melody of Mozart breathing wise content with things in general. Happy for him were the times when the day would break and the shadows of his tragic sorrow flee away. Then would we have the William Cowper that we love so well, whose purest joys he himself has described :—

> Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
> Delightful industry enjoyed at home,
> And Nature in her cultivated trim
> Dress'd to his taste, inviting him abroad.

XIX

IN A COLINTON GARDEN: WINTER

I once ventured to prefer a plea for Winter—winter in the country —on which a trenchant critic observed that winter in the country was all very well when you lived within hail of the town, and could see your friends daily to enlarge upon the charms of solitude. Cowper, in a sly, humorous aside, had long ago made a similar reply :—

> How sweet, how passing sweet is solitude—
> But grant me still a friend in my retreat,
> Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet.

I am willing to admit, therefore, that the student should select a winter hermitage to which the noise of the city may come to him across the fields. The fierce pressure of the crowd is certainly unwholesome, but a man who lives all the year round among hedges and ditches is apt to grow mouldy. A little of both is best. If you spend your afternoon at your club in town, you will enjoy all the more the walk home beneath the leafless trees in the starlight, when the owls are hooting from the ivy.—*Sir John Skelton's "Table Talk."*

XIX

IN A COLINTON GARDEN:

WINTER

IT is a February day of brilliant sunshine, and yet a cold west wind is blowing, trying alike to the tiny leaves of the rose-bushes that have come before the swallow dares and to those of us who somewhat impatiently, perhaps, are longing for the spring. After all, may we not console ourselves with the thought that to live in a land of summer afternoons might become monotonous? Here is no monotony. Our weather does not admit of it. Winter's frozen hand is tempered with uncertainties. Yesterday the garden was frost-bound; to-day there is almost a foretaste of spring, and these alternations go on far into the early summer. To-day, as I have said, a cold west wind is blowing fresh from the upper reaches of our river. To-morrow the east wind may sweep into my garden the distance-mellowed jangling of innumerable bells from the Scottish capital, a few miles distant. At the close of the introductory paper to this series I described "the old paths" of the Homeland as they appeared after my return from Hertfordshire. Here in this concluding paper I cannot refrain from reverting to the old subject of the vagaries of

our Scottish weather and its effect on the garden. Fitful gleams of sunshine lit up October now and then, when the garden was a medley of belated flowers. In the herbaceous garden the grand blue delphinium was no more, but the phlox remained, and sweet peas still blossomed. Garden varieties of the cowslip bloomed out of their season in the borders, along with sweet william, the purple autumn crocus, and the yellow St. John's wort, and one great white regal foxglove stood alone of all its peers. In November, during St. Martin's summer, a few roses still lingered, while the chrysanthemums reigned supreme in glorious disorder. A few weeks more, and on the first Sunday of December I bade farewell to the last of the white foxgloves ; its beautiful white bells were now tinged with yellow, and it no longer stood erect. Like the old year, it was dying. Beyond the garden there were like signs of the inevitable autumnal decay.

> The woods are hushed, their music is no more,
> The leaf is dead,

but only for a time. We love to think that the new spring is heralded by the appearance of the first snowdrop, and often on the leafless bough the thrush

> Sings a new song to the New Year.

The garden slopes southward to the Water of Leith. Beyond it are the Pentland Hills, culminating in Allermuir and Kirkyetton (or Caerketton). Allermuir, the hill nearest my garden, is sprinkled with snow, and the rivulets that in summer are indicated by a richer green are at the present moment tracks of melted snow

gleaming like silver in the winter sunshine. Sometimes Allermuir itself gleams with a silver sheen. You do not often see this effect. It occurs when, during a partial thaw, the sun strikes through a bank of cloud straight on the wet, snowy hill-side, when its rays are thus focussed on one particular spot ; hence one hill may be gleaming like silver while another remains cold and white. Yonder, too, in the park the crows are wheeling in mid-air, as dark as ravens they may be, but to the eye they are glistening gleams of light, their backs and wings reflecting the sunshine, and it is only when they pass to the northward that you note their sable plumes. In the garden itself, wherever there are leaves there is light. The strawberry leaves glisten, the laurels and japonica at the foot of the garden near the river sparkle with a richer sheen, and across the valley the ivy that clothes yonder leafless boughs shimmers in the unwonted sunshine.

Such is the world out of doors, cold but lusty. Within the summer-house facing the hills I can sit in comfort and dip here and there into my books. And yet it seems but yesterday since it was necessary to quit this haunt of peace and seek the shade of the great elm under which " Mike," faithfullest of Irish terriers, lies stretched in the cool grass dreaming his dreams, but always with one half-shut watchful eye waiting for the closing of the book, like a weary child at sermon time.

Ah, those summer evenings ! We think of them now when the snow is on the hill. It is a calm evening in early June once more. Surely that is the corncrake we hear, and, yes, there is the distant note of

the cuckoo. Amid the deepening shadows, for it is nearly ten o'clock, the outlines of the hills, though not crisp and sharp, are still well defined. It is an evening for noting lights and shadows, for studying " values," as the painter would say, for grouping masses of foliage. Yonder, for instance, is the white hawthorn, of a snowy whiteness compared with the lower tone of the sky. How grandly, too, the sycamores stand out, clothed in the full leafage of early summer. Through it all there is the murmur of the river rippling over the weir, the river of many memories, the ever-present Water of Leith.

But the lower temperature is not conducive to day-dreaming, and the old summer-house, somewhat neglected in summer time, receives once more its share of attention. Its bookshelves tell of sunny lands and sunny gardens over the hills and far away. Some I have visited, some I have seen only with the inward eye; but all are dear to the Rambler in Arcadia. Here, for example, are the essays of Bacon that I love, mainly because of one entitled *Of Gardens*. Opening the volume at random, my eyes light on this passage :—

" Alonso of Arragon was wont to say in commendation of age, that age appeareth best in four things—old wood best to burn ; old wine to drink ; old friends to trust ; and old authors to read."

I am afraid that is the spirit in which I make my selection of books on gardens and gardening. And so, with a prospect that is all sunshine, yet without heat, and with a horizon bounded by snow-clad hills, one may revel in a catalogue of old-world fruits and flowers. Thus I read on, and note my Lord Verulam's

hints for laying out an Elizabethan garden with alleys, hedges, and arches, with little turrets for bird-cages, with coloured glass here and there for the sun to play on, and in the centre of this mosaic a mount about thirty feet high, crowned with a banqueting-house. Ah me ! I look round the walls of my homely shelter while the west wind howls overhead amid the branches of the elm. In one of Davy Garrick's plays there is an account of a city merchant who had bought a place in the country and erected a high octagon summer-house on the mast of a ship, an East Indiaman, from which he could see all the coaches, chariots, and chaises pass up and down the road to London. " I'll mount you up there in the afternoon, my lord. 'Tis the pleasantest place in the world to take a pipe and a bottle ; and so you shall say, my lord." We all know that citizen. When in London he lived east of Temple Bar. He was a friend of John Gilpin, " with a snug wig trimmed round his broad face as close as a new-cut yew hedge."

This reminds me once again of my dear old friend Cowper, for I cannot forget him. His Letters should be read in a garden and nowhere else. What does *he* say of the charms of a summer-house ?

" I write in a nook that I call my *boudoir*. It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan-chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honeysuckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard."

The above extract is quoted from a letter dated June 25th, 1785. Nearly a year later—namely, on May

25th, 1786 (I like to be exact with these old-world dates)—we have a further reference to his summer-house, in a passage from which I have already partly quoted. He is writing to his cousin, Lady Hesketh :—

" I have at length, my cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a bandbox, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard, through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which therefore I already prefer to all the orchards in the world."

Is not this very charming ? Lady Hesketh, the brilliant beauty who attracted all eyes at Ranelagh ! " I shall see you often pass."

> Ye shepherds, tell me, tell me have you seen
> My Flora pass this way ?

How the soft music of her presence would soothe the spirit of this sensitive poet ! Ah, those ladies of old time ! Only in dreams may we see my lady pass this way. You remember Villon's *Ballade of Dead Ladies*. This was its *envoi*, as translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti :—

> Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
> Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
> Except with that for an overword—
> But where are the snows of yester-year ?

Where, indeed ! Where are the snows of yesterday ? They are fading even now on Allermuir hill-side as I

look up from my book. And what is the moral? Surely this :—

> Vita quid est hominis? Viridis floriscula mortis,
> Sole oriente oriens, sole cadente cadens.

I should like to refer also to William Shenstone, another of the eighteenth-century poets and letter-writers, and the father (shall I say?) of modern landscape gardening; but I have already recorded in this volume my impressions of a visit to his pleasure-grounds at The Leasowes, the small estate that was his finest poem, even as in the following century Abbotsford was "the consecration and the poet's dream" of Sir Walter Scott.

Shenstone notwithstanding, those were the days of the topiarius; but even then there were occasional protests against the mutilation of trees by the great shears of the topiarian artist. "We run into sculpture," writes the essayist in the *Guardian* of 29th September, 1713, "and are yet better pleased to have our trees in the most awkward figures of men and animals." In a delightful vein of humour and satire he concludes his paper by describing a catalogue of yews, box, and other evergreens to be sold by an enterprising gardener. Some of the lots were as follows :—

"Adam and Eve in yew; Adam a little shattered by the fall of the tree of knowledge in the great storm; Eve and the serpent very flourishing.

"The tower of Babel, not yet finished.

"St. George in box; his arm scarce long enough, but will be in a condition to stick the dragon by next April.

"A pair of giants, stunted, to be sold cheap.

"Divers eminent modern poets in bays, somewhat blighted, to be disposed of, a pennyworth.

"Noah's Ark in holly, standing on the mount; the ribs a little damaged for want of water."

Nature and the love of Nature were thus ever and anon reasserting themselves. The spirit of the old Adam had never been entirely "shattered." With regard to these formal gardens Bacon admits that "you may see as good sights many times in tarts," and then goes on to describe his heath, a wilderness of sweetbriar and honeysuckle, set with primroses, cowslips, and wild thyme. There is room also for the daisy, the periwinkle, and sweet william, for red roses, juniper, holly, bays, and rosemary. When next I revisit thy shrine, O large-browed Verulam, in that fine old Saxon church of St. Michael's, by the classic banks of Ver, near St. Albans, I shall not forget thy heath.

One cannot but smilingly contrast Bacon's knowledge of flowers with the Seigneur de Montaigne's sly remark that he can scarcely distinguish the cabbage from the lettuce in his garden. And here on the bookshelf, side by side with Montaigne and Bacon, is grand old Burton, another of the Elizabethans, who will gossip with you learnedly by the hour on old-fashioned herbs and simples and their uses. He, too, like Bacon, could appreciate mounts and arbours and artificial wildernesses, as well as admire the view from such places as Glastonbury Tower, Box Hill, in Surrey, or from "Oldbury, in the confines of Warwickshire, where I have often looked about me with great delight, at the foot of which hill I was born."

Among my favourite essays in the *Spectator* is that

dated 6th September, 1712, in which Joseph Addison describes his ideal of a garden. He also had his wilderness, and loved his banks of violets and primroses.

" My flowers," he writes, " grow up in several parts of the garden in the greatest luxuriancy and profusion. I am so far from being fond of any particular one, by reason of its rarity, that if I meet with any one in a field which pleases me, I give it a place in my garden. By this means when a stranger walks with me, he is surprised to see several large spots of ground covered with ten thousand different colours, and has often singled out flowers that he might have met with under a common hedge, in a field, or in a meadow, as some of the greatest beauties of the place."

Addison also wished his garden to be a sanctuary for his feathered friends. " I value my garden more for being full of blackbirds than cherries, and very frankly give them fruit for their songs." In both ways his views appeal to me. I love to transplant wild flowers to the wild part of my garden either for their beauty or association. It is pleasant to know that those primroses, for example, are descended from one that once grew with hundreds of others by the banks of the Nith at Robert Burns's farm of Ellisland, and that this flourishing clump has come from Hughenden. Here are ferns from Galloway and the Hebrides, foxgloves from Charles Lamb's country in Hertfordshire, honeysuckle from Tennyson's home in Surrey, and wind-flowers from the copse by Childsworth Farm that sheltered the Scholar-Gipsy. The showy cranesbills that adorn the garden slope in midsummer have sprung from seeds gathered in a distant meadow;

and some cowslip seeds, Shakespeare's favourite cowslip, brought from near Harry Percy's Castle of Warkworth, in Northumberland, immortalised by Shakespeare, have taken kindly root side by side with cowslips from the Sussex Downs. Thus do the north and the south of England add to the pale glories of the spring. I also agree with what Addison says about blackbirds. Surely one may share with them the homely fruit of a Scottish garden! There is enough and to spare, even of cherries. Last year, when we returned from our summer rambles, the garden looked like a birds' paradise. Though the strawberries were past, the cherries, rasps, and gooseberries were still in tempting condition. The birds were everywhere in evidence, particularly blackbirds and thrushes. They had been left so long in undisturbed possession that they seemed to resent our return. The young birds apparently did not know what to make of it, and played hide-and-seek, hopping round the bushes until their mothers, with a low, liquid chick-chick note, gave their fledglings the hint that we were entitled to share in Nature's harvesting. Now, in winter time the non-migratory birds have become pensioners more or less, and the blue and great tits who deserted the garden all the summer have returned to their winter quarters close to our windows. The acrobatic performances of the tits with cocoanuts and bits of suet are still literally in full swing.

When all is said it comes to this, that your true lover of gardens, like the true lover of literature and art, must have a catholic taste. To the book-lover the full-blooded richness of the Elizabethan Age, the dainty,

minuet-like verse of the days of Queen Anne, the wood-notes wild that heralded the return to Nature with the dawn of the nineteenth century, have each a corner in his heart of hearts. So, also, in art there are pictures that we love for their delicate perfection of detail, just as there are others that can convey a world of meaning in the broad brush of the impressionist. We love them all, the beauty of a Highland moor or an English heath, and the beauty of an Italian garden. Why shouldn't we ? And so, as I replace my *Spectators*, I pat them kindly on the back, just to see that they are trim and even on the shelf, as they should be ; while with that " inward eye which is the bliss of solitude " I can picture that formal garden with its flight of steps, its terraces, marble statuary, canals, fountains, and square grass plots, all as described in the *Spectator* for July 8th, 1712. Bathe that old-time garden in moonlight. Let Cynthia's beams whiten the white marble, glitter on the canal, let the nightingale fill the evening air with melody ; and let our dainty dilettante in faultless satins and brocade walk to and fro between the alleys, reciting Milton's *Il Penseroso*, and we have a typical picture of the courtliness of the eighteenth century.

A moonlight garden ! The very thought pleases one, and in the evening before concluding this paper I step into the garden to compare this picture with that of a Scottish garden in winter time, with the snow glistening on the white hills, whiter than the moon-bathed statuary, a nocturne in silver. The moon in fullest radiance hangs in the great cloudless vault of Heaven ; in the south-west only the greater

stars, such as the constellation of Orion, are visible; while in the south-east Kirkyetton is lost in a pile of evening clouds resting on its summit. How delicate is the gradation from snow-clad hill to snowy cloud-land! Overhead every twig of the elm, every "barky finger," as Shakespeare says, stands out in clear relief, and the trimly pruned rasp canes set in regular lines cast their chequered shadows over the snow.

XX

THE EPILOGUE

Glancing back over what I have written, it seems but the scattered reminiscences of a single summer. In fairyland there is no measurement of time, and in a spot so sheltered from the turmoil of life's ocean three years hasten away with a noiseless flight, as the breezy sunshine chases the cloud-shadows across the depths of a still valley.

Hawthorne's "Mosses from an old Manse."

XX

THE EPILOGUE

"THE e'en brings a' hame," and it is not inappropriate that the record of these literary pilgrimages in the old paths should close amid the fitful flickerings of the bookroom fire. Here one can live over again those happy memories, and it is the charm of the wanderings of a literary pilgrim that, when in the mood, you have only to take from the bookshelves the volumes containing all that is best of those whose haunts you have been visiting in the summers and autumns of the past. Stay, do not trim the lamp just yet. The motto of the opening paper might equally apply to the Epilogue—

> When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
> I summon up remembrance of things past.

Who ever wrote anything so divinely well as our sweetest Shakespeare? You have only to think of Arden, and once more Rosalind and Cicely come tripping through the woodlands. The particular *locus* of Shakespeare's plays, Venice or Padua, Athens or Messina, does not concern me; these place-names are incidental to the source of the play. I think only of Perdita as a sweet English maiden with her daffodils, her rosemary and rue. There's Christopher Sly, the

tinker, old Sly's son of Burton Heath, the merry rogue, who ran up a score for ale at Marian Hacket's ! What had he to do with learned Padua ? I am sure it was a descendant of Christopher whom I met on his way from Mary Uff's. There's Dogberry, too, who, I fancy, caught Shakespeare napping in the lost porch of the parish church at Grendon Underwood, and Autolycus, whom I met near Wheathampstead in the vicinity of No Man's Land. It was delightful to listen to his flow of wit as he plied his wares at Luton market in Bedfordshire. From Shakespeare's Arden, for I am not responsible for the later wanderings of Autolycus, 'tis but a step to Shenstone's Arcady, " The Leasowes," that poet's dream, around which the iron grip of Birmingham is gradually tightening. Memories of the gentle Cowper still cling to my inward visions of Olney and Huntingdon, with their great river and dim discovered spires hid away amid their wealth of poplars.

Somewhere by the pleasant banks of Lea I can picture that pathetic couple Charles and Mary Lamb in search of some river-side inn where they may rest at noonday and call for Hertfordshire ale. You can see Lamb poking fun at the angler of the cockney school, who patiently sits all day by the sluggish stream speculating upon traditionary gudgeons. Now am I once again at Lichfield and I am dreaming of " the Ladies of the Vale," the ladies of old time, not those of whom Villon sang, for I am thinking of Mrs. Thrale, Lady Hesketh, and Bolingbroke's sister, Henrietta St. John, Lady Luxborough. Nor must I forget sweet Gulielma Penn, who rests at Jordans. There is the Scholar-Gipsy, too. Who would have remembered him were

it not for Matthew Arnold ? Arnold recalls Oxford, and I cannot dissociate " that sweet city with her dreaming spires " from the author of *The Christian Year*, and so I fancy I hear Newman saying of the elusive Keble, with a smile on his saintly face, " How can I profess to paint a man who will not sit for his picture ? "

When I wish to recall the pensive Gray and " Penn, the Apostle," the glorious Milton at Chalfont, or the Disraelis at Bradenham and Hughenden, I step once more into the garden, for sometimes, when the half-moon dimly lights the southern horizon and brings out in relief a row of beeches whose tapering branches point towards the sky, sometimes at such an hour I fancy that these Pentland Hills of mine are the distant Chilterns, and that my beeches are akin to those that shelter the graves of the Penns and Penningtons, the beeches that Beaconsfield and Thomas Gray loved so well, " dreaming out their old stories to the winds."

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